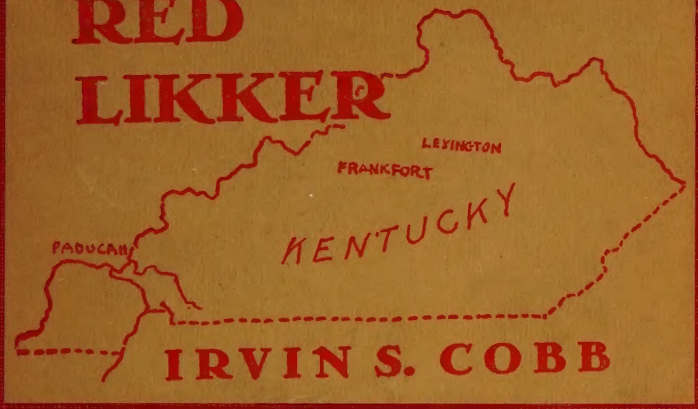
RED LIKKER



IRVIN S. COBB

MASTER CARD

DO NOT REMOVE THIS CARD
FROM THIS BOOK,
PENALTY OF $2.00 IF CARD IS
LOST OR MUTILATED,

COBB I S
AUTHOR
126106
ACC. NO.
RED LIKKER

DREXEL L
ST. JOS

COBB I S
RED LIKKER
PS -3505
C14 R3
126106

Library
St. Joseph's College
City Avenue at 54th Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19131

DEMCO

RED LIKKER

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

*

ALL ABOARD

*

CHIVALRY PEAK

*

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

*

THIS MAN'S WORLD

RELEASED

RED LIKKER

IRVIN S. COBB

PS
3505
C14
R3

PS3505.C14R3 ST. JOSEPH'S UNIVERSITY STX
Red likker
3 9353 00078 8461

COSMOPOLITAN BOOK CORPORATION
NEW YORK—1929

126106

✯

COPYRIGHT, 1929, BY
IRVIN S. COBB

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED INCLUDING THAT OF TRANSLATION INTO FOREIGN LANGUAGES INCLUDING THE SCANDINAVIAN
PRINTED IN THE U. S. A. BY J. J. LITTLE AND IVES COMPANY, NEW YORK

✯

First Edition

TO

BILL HOGG AND HIS BROTHER MIKE

* * *

FOREWORD

THE characters in this book, all of them, are imaginary characters.

The main setting for the story is an imaginary county. You will find no such county on the map of the state, although you could find there more than one county which conceivably might have been it.

The political events described in a later chapter—notably a gubernatorial campaign and an election—have no basis in actual fact; they too are imaginary.

The Author

CONTENTS

I	AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING	1
II	TWO PIONEERS AND THE BOTTLE	13
III	AS A HOUSE DIVIDED	28
IV	THE YEAR OF '61	36
V	THE YEAR OF '65	45
VI	THE HOME-COMING	52
VII	BIRD & SON	57
VIII	A BOY OF THE BLUE GRASS	73
IX	A CHARACTER SKETCH	88
X	MRS. RINGO AIRS HER VIEWS	94
XI	IN THE SPRING A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY—	113
XII	THE GENTLE ART OF DISTILLING	119
XIII	HOSPITALITY AS A RELIGION	129
XIV	IT'S NOT LIKE THAT ANY MORE	139
XV	THE SHOOTING SCRAPE	162
XVI	AN OFFER IN WEDLOCK	177
XVII	VANISHED PICTURES	183
XVIII	A GAP IS BRIDGED	191
XIX	ENTER THE GOLDEN AGE	206

XX	THE YOUNG MEN GO TO WAR	219
XXI	A MARRIAGE TAKES PLACE OVERSEAS	228
XXII	SWAN SONG	238
XXIII	DEMON RUM IS BURIED	249
XXIV	A LITTLE MISSIONARY WORK	255
XXV	THE COLONEL GROWS OLDER	272
XXVI	A CALLER ON BUSINESS	280
XXVII	MAINLY ABOUT POLITICS	285
XXVIII	PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT	292
XXIX	TOTAL LOSS	308
XXX	CHRISTMAS COMES BUT ONCE A YEAR	314
XXXI	WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW DOESN'T HURT YOU	321
	POSTSCRIPT	333

RED LIKKER

RED LIKKER

* I *

AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING

ON THE ground where Number Two bonded warehouse of Bird & Son's Old Blockhouse Distilling Company would one day stand, the first of the Birds to come through the Gap and along the Wilderness Trail into this virgin country, past the mountains, sat down by his door, it being a fine spring morning, and wrote a letter to the young governor of the young state. He wrote with a pen made by him from the feather of a wild goose's wing. He dipped his quill in ink made by his wife from the gall juice of a white oak.

There was no affectation in the use of these things. These were the pioneering times and this was the farthermost rim, the ultimate horizon, so some predicted, of the white man's civilization on the Western Hemisphere. His squirrel rifle with its light small curly-maple stock and its long heavy octagonal barrel, was propped between Isham Bird's knees while he wrote, and the "Injun cigar" tree under which he sat spilled its shat-

tered and wilting blossoms on his hunched shoulders and on the puncheon board which served him for a desk.

He wetted his nib and he wrote as follows:

On Bird's Fork, May 12, 1793

D^r^ Sir—

I gladly embrace the opportunity of leting you know our Situation At This Place, at present our Situation is very dangerous—the Indians Are Almost daily seen on our fronters—And on Thursday last I seen myself 7 or Eight on the waters of Grimm's Run; & the people at this place are Very Much discourage, the Indians Seem to Rush on so violently & no Soldiers sent to put a Stop to them —And if this place brakes up All the settlements on this River Will brake up likewise—

Now My earnest Request of you is to order About Ten Men to our Afsistance this summer As Soon As Pofsible, your Complianc Will Very Much oblige your Very Hum^b^ Ser^t^

ISHAM BIRD

To Isaac Shelbay Esq^r^
Governor of the state of Kaintuckey

He spelled the last name of the governor according to his own peculiar fancy. But he spelled the name of the state the way most men of the Western Border did spell it in those days. They spelled it so because they pronounced it so.

He folded the double sheet of thick grayish paper and backed it with the address and sealed it with a dab of sticky sweet-gum and put it by until the seal should dry. Shadwell Bird, his unmarried brother, would take it with him across to the provisional capital at Lexington when he started for there on horseback the following morning at sunup, riding along the trace with its blazed saplings for markers until he issued forth six miles out from Lexington upon a rutty wagon road.

It would be Shad's first trip to Lexington. He had lately arrived from beyond the Cumberlands. He was aiming to marry Hannah Bartlett, younger sister of Isham's wife. She would be out soon, if all went well; and then they would be married and then the brothers would be brothers-in-law.

Isham Bird, the elder brother, was no scribe; was better with the ax than with the pen. With an ax he could at one stroke take a kerf as broad as your hand from the heart-wood of a green hickory, but when he took his pen in hand he labored over the task.

Having finished with this task, he now reared himself back for a bit of ease on his stool, which was a log butt sawed off squarely, top and bottom, and set on end. With his head against the split-log door-jamb he looked across the clearing where corn shoots were coming up in the crooked furrows that wound between the trunks of newly girdled trees yet standing, and among felled trees which, so far, he had not had time to burn or to chop up or to drag away.

To get a crop in had been his main desire ever since he traveled out from the Yadkin the fall before, with his family and his land-warrant, and picked this site for his homestead. Later there would be time for tidying up his acres.

Building a cabin and making it weather-tight and fortifying it with palisades against assault, had taken all winter; so his plowing had been delayed. Not all the chips which had covered his dooryard were gone; some had been burned for kindling; the rest lay about thickly.

It was very peaceful there in the clearing. Pairs of redbirds, both the tufted kind and the smooth-pated kind, flickered back and forth, making quick shifting splashes of cardinal or scarlet against the deep background of the thickets down toward the branch; and constantly flocks of parrakeets passed overhead like flights of slender green-and-yellow darts.

There were hundreds of these parrakeets about; there seemed to be thousands of them, they were so nervous and so constantly in motion. There seemed to be no end of them. Even in the mating-time and the nesting-time when other birds paired off they colonized together.

Isham Bird's slave man, Easter, would pause frequently from tending with his hoe, in the patch of flax between where his master sat and where the straggly corn rows began, to look up at the fantastic gaudy little creatures. Neither Easter nor his master would have believed anyone who might have predicted—only, of course, no one in their lifetime ever did—that of all the

winged things of the forest the parrakeets would be the first mysteriously and entirely to vanish—they first and then, after years and years and all at once, the passenger-pigeons.

In the brush-roofed lean-to behind the cabin the plucked and smoked and salted carcasses of pigeons still filled sundry firkins and casks. Bird and his negro and his oldest boy, Isham Junior, had netted them at their roosts on the river in the October before, soon after the family got here from North Carolina. Made into stews, the bodies of these pigeons furnished a winter dependency should the household tire of such fresh meats as venison or wild turkey or elk hams.

When Isham Bird was a much older man, indeed a very old man, a stranger named Audubon would make a far pilgrimage hither for the curious purpose of studying these pigeons as they descended, millions on billions of them, in hosts that darkened the skies and with a sound like rolling thunder, to people the roosts to which always they swarmed in the season of their autumnal migration and again in the spring on their return northward. But now this Isham Bird was a man in the prime of his strength and his maturity—a gaunt, spare, ginger-haired man with long sinewy arms and long legs, but very short-waisted—"a close-coupled one" his neighbors called him. Sometimes they called him "High Pockets."

Except for the bickerings of the birds, it also was peaceful in the coverts which marked the creek banks

at the edge of the "dead'ning." But this tall homesteader put no faith in that peacefulness; it might be a false peace.

That edging yonder was a soft green mask for the face of danger. That jay, now, the noisy one which screamed so stridently in the distance, but did not show himself—he might not be a jay at all; that rain-crow pleading for rain somewhere down in the slashes might be a painted scout calling a signal for the sudden attack and, if the attack should succeed, the massacre. That owl—but that one was an honest owl—which screeched so close by the barred and shuttered cabin just before dawn, had brought Isham Bird to alarmed wakefulness on the instant, and he sitting up on his pallet and groping for his weapons.

He lay always with his weapons in arm's reach. In 1793, among these outposts, you bought your life at the price of an everlasting vigilance. You walked warily by day, and by night you had peril for your bedfellow. You had always before you hideous examples of what a slackening of this watchfulness might mean to you and yours.

There had been, for instance, the affair at the settlement in Quinn's Bottom on the Elkhorn, and it a settlement much larger than this one here on Bird's Fork, and much closer, too, to the encircling crescent of "forts" and "stations" which on the eastward formed a dubious and uncertain line of protection for those living within its irregular half-moon. That had

befallen the year before—in April, 1792, two months, about, before the state became a state.

It was a large war-band from above the Ohio which struck that blithe April morning on the infant community of Quinn's Bottom. The assault was a surprise assault and before the raiders fled they killed both of the Cooks and Lewis Martin and William Dunn's two sons and a negro man belonging to Dunn; and they captured and carried away with them two more buck negroes.

The Cooks were the first to die. For them there was no warning. They were shearing the wool off their ewes in a little meadow fronting the cabin which their families shared. From the adjacent brake a volley burst forth. One of the brothers dropped in his tracks and was scalped and mutilated where he dropped. The other, shot through and through between the shoulders, was dying on his feet as he ran for the cabin. But he reached the doorstep before he fell.

His wife and his brother's wife dragged him across the threshold and made the door fast. In another instant the Indians were battering with their war hatchets at the half-timbers of the door. Outside were thirty or more ravening savages. Inside were two women, three small children, one corpse on the floor. There were no windows to be breached, which was lucky for the besieged. There was a gun and a powder-horn, but no bullet with which to load the gun.

One of the women split a scrap of lead and chewed it

round between her teeth and rammed it down the barrel and she made a hole in the dried mud chinking of the wall and poked the muzzle through and fired and killed a bedaubed big warrior who was directing the attack on their citadel. So at that the Indians set fire, one place and another, to the roof of poles and thatched brush, and fell back a little way, taking cover.

Then one of the widows—the one who had fired the lucky shot—climbed to the loft and tore away part of the thatch, and her sister-in-law passed water up to her and she put out some of the fires. They ran out of water and the roof still blazed. Then the woman below handed up hens' eggs, and the woman above, with her head and shoulders exposed to the leaden slugs and the arrows that pecked and pelted about her, smashed the eggs into the little creeping flames and doused them.

But when the eggs were all gone, one small fire still burned. So she descended and she stripped from her man's limp dead body his woolen vest and carried it aloft and spread it, all soaked through as it was and dripping and sticky, over the last bit of stubborn fire and smothered that out; and soon after that the Indians retreated.

Oh, the women played their parts well. Take the earlier affair at Bryan's Station, one of the first of these stations to be set up: There the settlers had word of the enemy's advance and took refuge inside their square stockade and stood off the assailing force for two days and two nights. Then their supply of water ran out and

except from a spring which stood two hundred feet or so from the fortification, there was no water to be had, and from thirst the besieged began to suffer grievous torments.

The Indians apparently had withdrawn, but these frontiersmen had experience of border wiles; they felt sure the red men still were hid close by awaiting a moment when the whites might relax their guard. It was a woman who thought of an artifice whereby the beleaguered might have water and yet no able-bodied fighter be killed trying to bring it.

At dawn she marshaled all the other women within the walls, the young and the old, the grandmothers and the half-grown girls, and she drilled them in what they must do. They did it, too.

First though the gates of the fort were thrown back, the sentries, apparently confident and careless, lounging in the gap. Spying from their leafy ambuscades, the Indians saw these things and were heartened thereat. What they could not see was that behind the palisades the best marksmen of the garrison were crouched, their rifles poised for sharpshooting, their eyes glued to peep-holes, their nerves taut.

Now then there issued forth between the opened gates a procession of women, all bearing buckets, kettles, piggins, keelers, puncheons, jugs, water-skins, gourd-bottles, gourd-calabashes, crocks, even churns. Chatting unconcernedly, singing, some of them, they moved with placid, unhurried steps down the gentle

slope to the spring. Still without haste or seeming concern, they filled their vessels, slowly went back up the little hill.

Not until they were within a few yards of safety did they break ranks. Quickly then, like frightened partridges, they ran for shelter and as the last one scurried through, the gates were slammed to behind her while a futile scattered squall of slugs and arrows spattered against the logs, and from the thwarted Shawnees arose a gobble of rage and disappointment and from the exultant "long hunters" within, an answering chorus of defiant, jubilant howls and derisive catcalls.

Neither to those who did these things nor to those subsequent founders of the baby commonwealth who had news of them, would it seem conceivable that a day might ever come when by a little bubbly spring gurgling from a limestone cleft, a monument would stand to bear the names of those mothers and those daughters who fetched up the water, or that heroic odes would be written to glorify the memory of the woman who put out the fire with the fresh warm blood of her husband's drained body.

They did not know, those borderers of the generation of Isham Bird and his wife and his brother Shadwell and his wife, that they were making history for patriots to treasure. If they gave it a thought, they thought only of making homes for themselves out of the solitudes, of making inheritances for their children, and their children's children. To that they dedicated

themselves with a certain simple and whole-souled efficiency.

They endured the greater hardships of their present lot because all their days they had known great hardships. They contended with the obstinate aborigine and finally drove him back; and they drove back the wolf and the panther and the bear.

They ate gritted hominy of their own manufacturing by a primitive process and, until more and more grist-mills were built, they mostly pounded their corn in crude mortars left behind by the Indians. They sweetened their mush with the boiled-down juices of the "sugar bush," which was the maple, and the scantier, more astringent sap of the "molasses tree," which was a variety of hickory.

With salt from the "licks" where the buffaloes had wallowed, they salted the hard-baked journey-cakes which you and I of our day call "johnny-cakes." They went barefoot in the summer and in the winter wore moccasins and buskins of deerskin or elk-hide or buffalo-hide. They wore hunting-shirts of fleece from the backs of their own sheep, which the women carded and spun and fashioned into cloth and then dyed with infusions of bark and the hulls of the black walnut.

Next to their bodies they wore garments of tow, which they themselves hackled from the hemp, or, in emergencies, garments of the hackled fibers of the nettle. They set up schoolhouses and church-houses and court-houses and gallows and whipping-posts. They

made a singing sweetness on earth of what had been a ramping wilderness.

They made something else of which they took no note nor speculated over, since it likewise belonged to the future. Of the spirit and the passion that was in them and of the essences of the soil and the climate and the environment, they seeded for a breed of self-reliant, high-tempered, high-headed, high-handed, high-talking folk who would be quick to take offense and quick with violent force to resent it; a big-boned, fair-skinned, contentious, individualistic breed, jealous of their rights, furious in their quarrels, deadly in their feuds, generous in their hospitalities; a breed who in the main would take their religion and their politics very seriously and their adventures very lightly; a breed of lovers of women, lovers of oratory and disputation, lovers of horses and horse-racing, lovers of cock-fighting and card-playing, lovers of dogs and guns—and whisky . . . Blue Grass people.

★ II ★

TWO PIONEERS AND A BOTTLE

GOING and coming and staying overnight in Lexington, Shadwell Bird was away for three days. On the afternoon of the third day, late, they heard him approaching before anybody saw him. He was singing at the top of his voice, with no regard for the tune—was singing a folk-song about the Battle of the Cowpens.

Isham Bird, harkening to it as he stood in the littered dooryard, knitted his bushed sandy brows in displeased uneasiness. A man who sang as loudly as that while traversing the bowery bridle-trail through these woods was going out of his way to invite trouble, what with the country alive with topknotted marauders.

The reason for Shad's incaution was revealed when he emerged into view at the verge of the clearing. He was swaying a little in the saddle, his feet free of the stirrups, the foppish fringes on his close-fitted leggings flopping against his calves. He whooped with a tipsy hilarity at sight of Isham coming to meet him, and letting go the reins, waved one arm over his head. His rifle swung in the elbow crotch of his other arm.

Getting off his mare, he dropped the flintlock and fell sprawling. Saying nothing, his brother helped him to his feet and would have helped him ungirth the mare, but Shadwell motioned him back. Drinking or sober, he cared for his own horse-flesh. He cast off the saddle and the saddle-cloth and the twin saddle-pouches, and leaving them on the ground lurched off toward the brush-and-bark stable behind the cabin, his lathered nag trailing behind him and grunting.

"Look in my saddle-poke—the right-hand one," he called over his shoulder. "What you'll find there's goin' to pleasure you mightily."

Having fed the wearied animal and bedded her, this courier presently came back, walking unsteadily, his face very flushed, to where Isham mutely awaited him. Isham's oldest son, a boy of twelve, was there now with a cane pole over his shoulder and a sizable catch of perch and baby bass strung by their gills on a willow twig; and Isham's wife had come outdoors to learn the tidings, bringing her girl baby in her arms.

The two remaining children were too small to be interested in hearing what news the returned traveler might have brought. They were over yonder at the back side of the corn-patch bearing old Easter company.

In his hand Isham held what Shadwell had bade him seek for in the saddle-bag. It was a wickered case-bottle, stoppered with a corn-cob.

"Tried it yet?" said Shadwell, his voice thickened,

"Not yet."

"Well, you'd best not lose any more time then. It's prime. Man, I tell you it's just prime! Primest ever I swallowed anywheres or any place."

"What is it?"

"Likker. What else would it be but likker?"

"But it's red!" Isham was holding the flask up to the west and through the meshes in the plaiting the glass, by reason of its contents, showed him a deep russety-amber shade. That was puzzling.

"Shore, it's red. That's the joke about it. Red as stinkabus rum, e'en near it, yet powerful well-flavored. Take a swig and then tell me if it ain't about the potentest likker ever you put lip to."

"That can wait," said Isham, and slipped the bottle inside his shirt. "What's stirrin'? What did the governor say about sendin' us a few of his muster-men?"

"Gad, but I'm hot as a she-mink!" exclaimed Shadwell. He shed his linsey-woolsey tunic and tossed his catskin cap inside. Then, suddenly remembering his manners, he ceremoniously shook hands with his sister-in-law and chucked the baby under the chin.

"Welcome back, Shaddy," she said. Until then she had not spoken. "We're mighty glad you're back safe and sound. Anything happen on the way?"

"Nothin' happened to me but what was first-rate. Look at me, Tildy—don't I look happy? But plenty that ain't so happy is happenin' all through these far territories."

"Indians?" Involuntarily she pressed the child closer.

"Shorely. The cussed varmin air hazin' the people t'other side of Lexington even worse than here on this nigh side. Two poor fellows laywayed and killed whilst bee-huntin' just outside of Harrod's Town last Tuesday was a week, and not hair, hide nor moccasin track to show of the lurkin', murderin', scurvy devils that did it. And a young gal snatched up and carried off alive and kickin' before her mammy's eyes whilst a-milkin' of a cow half a day's ride north from Logan's Blockhouse, and the posse that formed and followed after never caught up with 'em but had to turn back from the Licking, wore-down and tuckered-out.

"But that ain't holdin' back nor hinderin' the people from pourin' in. That's it—they're just pourin' in. Parties in from the Gap every week now and yesterday evenin' a dispatch-rider bringin' word of the biggest party yet cruisin' down the Ohio on broadhorns and headed for Corn Island and the Falls.

"Oh, but they're comin' down on us thick and fast, comin' by the thousands. Let this keep up and purty soon Kaintuckey's goin' to be crowded up worse'n the old Carolina country is that we left behind us. Me, I didn't traipse away out here for that. Me, I like it where the 'habitants ain't so pesterin'-many."

"How about my sister Hannah? Any news of my sister Hannah?"

"She sent word on ahead by the Bledsoes—Yadkin folks, they air, and just arrived with their paws full of land-grants. She'll be out in July or August—any-

how somewheres around then—with another big party that ain't made up yet. She's to send on word again before they start."

For a man bespoken, he said it casually. Isham broke in. His impatient thoughts were on his appeal for a squad of paid guardians.

"What did the governor say when you handed him my letter?" he demanded. "Did you tell him I was writin' not only for my own but for everybody along this fork?"

"Well, I tell you: I didn't see him."

"Didn't see him?"

"No. He was too busy, they said, to be seein' everybody that's a-beggin' for guardeens. The one I saw was a young jimber-jawed whippersnapper of a clark that they termed the secretary. He took your letter but he didn't let me in to where Ike Shelby was. Said you might be hearin' later by some express journeyin' this way—if Ike Shelby got 'round to it. But, Ish, we'll get none of the militiamen to help us out here; too many calls already in ahead of yours from settlements yet more outlyin' even than this one and in worse fixes from the Injuns prowlin'.

"We'll just have to make out the best way we can. Well, me, I'm comb-trimmed and heeled, and I'm feelin' fit for frolickin' or fightin' and right now don't care a thrip which one 'tis. It's action I'm honin' for, yes, my ladies." He caught up his gun from the earth and patted its dusty stock.

"Then we're in a desperate and a sorry case, for shore," said Isham Bird, sorely. Like a man beset by bad visions, he looked about him. His wife sped indoors almost like a creature in flight. For all that she was stout-hearted, a terror renewed was gnawing at her.

"Take a deep nip out of that there sweet little flagon of mine and I'll guarantee you won't stay downcasted but 'll feel all hoped-up and contented-like in a minute," advised Shadwell. "I could do with another smidgin' of it myself."

"But it's red," said Isham, still puzzled, as he brought the flask forth again. "Red like wine, sort of, and yet not wine but true spirits, you say. How could that be?"

"I'm fixin' to tell you. Seems like some fellow or other over yon just a fairish piece from here at the new fullin'-mill by the Royal Spring on the Elkhorn, made himself some corn likker and set it off in a boughten keg for to mellow up. Well, months passed, maybe a year or two, I don't know how long. Then he drew off a measurin'-noggin ful for to sample it and, lo and behold, instead of being' white, 'twas a pinky-brownish red like what you see.

"Says he to himself then, this fellow I'm tellin' you about, says he: 'Damnation, it must 'a' sp'iled on me some way.' But it smelt right and when he tasted it, why, by Swamp Fox Marion, if it didn't taste better'n any he'd ever tasted in his life before, I'm a liar! So he

dreens off the rest of it and busts the keg open and he finds out that the insides of her is all burnt black-like.

"Seems like the coopenin' fellow that made this keg for him must 'a' damaged the staves with live coals somehow but sealed it up and said nothin' to nobody about it. So the fellow at the fullin'-mill didn't say anything to anybody either. But with his own hands he coopered him up a yet bigger keg and he put a good heavy burn on her insides and he poured her full of some new triple-run that he'd made and drove the bung home and set her by for a longish spell.

"And bimeby, when he broached her—or leastwise that's the tale that's goin' round—why, there was the same thing over again—red likker, the best ever. And he spread the word broadcast, and so anybody that's got a distill of his own is free for to do the same. There's a big cravin' on for it already."

"*Hum*," said Isham. "Now that does beat me. That's shorely one huckleberry above my tallest persimmon. But I've heard our sire tell it how his sire told him that back in the old country, back in Scotland, they would use sherry casks from the Spanish countries to keep the spirits in so's to give 'em a yellowy color and a special flavorin'. But likker that's red from char-wood—that's a new dangle to me!" He uncorked the flask and from it took a long slow draft.

"Shad, it shorely does go down slick," he agreed as he spat and, having wiped his mouth on his sleeve, passed the bottle. "Slick as a whistle, I do profess. Next

batch I make us I'm goin' to brand one keg with fire inside just for to see what comes of it."

"You're shootin' right you will!" The junior took the bottle down from his lips to make the response. "And if you should forget about it when the time comes, I won't. Because from this day forth I'm a red-likker boy."

That a man should produce by hand his own spirits and drink them himself and sell the surplus, paying no tithe or government tax, if so be he had a surplus and could find him a market, was part of the ordained planning of things to the Birds and their kind. On that first great continental wave of emigration westward from the seaboard states, floating down the tradewaters if they hailed from Maryland or Pennsylvania or farther north, marching in long slow caravans of carts and ox-wains if they hailed from Virginia, as usually they did, or from North Carolina or farther south, the incomers brought along their little portable stills and their small mash-tubs with them—mainly home-made wooden stills these were, but now and then you saw a treasured copper still, which would be a prized heritage from some European ancestor of the Colonial period.

Of the small wild Indian peaches and the apples from trees of their own planting and of the blackberries and the native frost-grapes, they made raw, rasping hot brandies, but of the corn of their growing they made a whisky blander than any brandy, smoother to the palate and more in demand—a steadily growing flow

which thenceforth would course like a sanguinary flood throughout the history of the land; be woven, like a bright and beaded thread, in and out of the lives of the people of the land.

The demand came as the reputation for merit of these heady outputs spread. That hardy race of early American argonauts—those men proudly boasting that they were "half-hoss, half-alligator" and on occasion proving it—who presently were taking their flotillas of flat-boats out of the tributary rivers—the Kentucky, the Salt and the Licking upstream here, the Green, the Cumberland and the Tennessee farther below—and thence on downstream of the Ohio into the Mississippi, took with them as part of their cargoes this new ruddy kind of whisky.

Along with their potables they carried sorghum and peltries; hemp and pork; dried apples and dried peaches; tobacco and pumpkins; grain and feed—products and produce of many sorts to be bartered off in the Spanish and the French possessions. As a shipper, Isham Bird on a somewhat later day would be engaged in this traffic and would profit thereby. He made no voyages, though. That would be for Shadwell to do. It suited Shadwell well.

At the beginning it was a catch the keel-boatmen sang that caught his fancy. It ran like this:

Come all ye fine young fellows
Who have got a mind to range

Into some far-off countree
Your fortunes for to change.
We'll lay us down upon the banks
Of the blessed O-hi-o;
Through the wildwoods we'll wander,
And we'll chase the buffalo!

He loved it all and most of all he loved the semibarbaric rudeness of it—the company, the camping on bar or island, the thousand-and odd-miles stretch of gantlet-running between hostile tribes and past the dens of river pirates who were just as fierce and just as treacherous as the tribesmen and far shrewder; the mad debauch when the voyagers with their primitive argosies came safely to New Orleans—if they did; the long, leisurely, perilous journey homeward-bound over the famous and bloody Natchez Trail. He made three of these round trips and each trip was gone from home for months on months.

That sort of thing was not for Isham, the soberer and more thoughtful, the cannier man of the two. He served his county in the first years of its foundation as a magistrate; later went to Frankfort to serve it as a legislator; and dying in the fulness of years, by his own direction on his death-bed, was buried in his buckskin hunting-shirt with his long rifle in the coffin by his side, his bullet pouch at his belt, his powder-horn swung by its broad strap over his shoulder; and sewed fast to the front breadth of the strap, four black scalp-locks and

one tawny one—the black tufts being from Indians of his own killing and the paler one a circlet of hair lifted for bounty from a Hessian shot by him in the Revolution.

Likewise from his death-bed the patriarch dictated his will, leaving to his eldest son, among other possessions, his "great distill" and to his second son his "least distill," meaning by that his lesser one. He provided suitably, and according to his means, for his third son and for his daughter Adelaide and for his aged widow, who survived him by two years; and finally out of his remaining store of this world's goods, made small benefactions for each of his four black slaves and for Kathie McMullen, the Irish bound girl who had been superior servant in the household and practically a member of it since her childhood.

He left, besides, six hundred acres of land, cleared and uncleared, with the buildings, the outbuildings, the plenishings and the gear upon them, charging though that this land not be parceled off but kept together as an inheritance for his descendants. He left nothing at all to his brother Shadwell Bird, despite that Shadwell Bird, now an elderly man himself, had need of whatsoever might come his way.

Long before, the ways of the brothers who also were brothers-in-law had parted. Their parting was after the death of Hannah Bartlett, Shadwell's wife. He had one child by her, a male child and Gideon his name, before she died at eighteen of the spotted sickness which

sprang up out of the dank new ground, so people believed, and which by the hundreds claimed its victims one wet summer. Then he took up with a half-breed Cherokee woman and by her begat a whole covey of black-eyed bronzy-skinned young ones.

That squaw-mothered brood of his was to be born after he quit the place of gently rolling swales which the brothers first had preempted, and squatted some twelve miles distant in the tangled country along the river in a place of heavy timber and shaly creeks and many dark hollows and as many steep roach-backed hills.

He followed the game—the turkeys and the grouse and the deer, all seeking denser coverts as the incoming streams of Easterners increased from living trickles to living torrents. The buffalo and the elk already had disappeared before that advance. Shad Bird was of those —and they were many—who rather would stalk down their food than raise it out of the soil. So he retreated as the cane-brakes did, to the remoter broken parts, abandoning the pastures and the groves, as the cane-brake had done.

It was curious how the cane which once had so thickly clothed this wide plateau fled before the farmer. You did not have to plow it out of your meadow. It seemed to quit the meadow of its own accord, as though the same instinct for flight was in it which also was in the animals and the birds. This year it would be everywhere hereabouts, tall and lusty, and next year it would

all be gone save for a few stunty clumps, growing steadily thinner and punier.

As the cane went away a new kind of grass, spreading like a magic carpet, took its place on the "barrens" and in the made pastures. You had only to clear away the timber, grub up the roots, make sunny spaces where before there had been deep shade, and here it came, creeping.

There was a tradition about this grass. It was said that Findlay, the Irishman whose eyes were the first white man's eyes to look upon the great hunting-ground which the Cherokees called by the Algonquin word Kentucky, meaning the level place, brought it with him.

Daniel Boone may have been the pathfinder but John Findlay, a lesser-known man, was the pathmaker, for he showed Boone the way. But long before that he, the adventurous trader, went with certain friendly Shawnee braves to their favorite camping spot of Eskippakithika and there set him up a hut within a log stockade and spread his trade goods in his fortress.

As the story had it, he had carried his wares wrapped against breakage in hay grown of a stock brought by someone from Great Britain and he cast this hay upon the earth and it seeded itself in the sod and presently grew with a luxuriance almost beyond imagining. So for a spell the pioneers of Boone's day and Kenton's, which also was the day of Isham Bird, dubbed it English grass or Lancaster grass, after Lancaster in Pennsylvania, where Findlay lived.

But presently, marking how when the wind stirred the heavy seed-heads their yellow pods against the deep lush color of the stems cast a soft bluish overlay upon the whole rippling field, they fell to calling it blue grass. But except in the time of ripening and except when the breeze rumpled it, it was about the greenest grass you ever saw. Cattle, feeding on it, throve amazingly.

Now Shadwell Bird the ex-keel-boater, saw in the advancing blue grass not a promise but a threat to his most beloved pursuits. So he took his gun and his chattels and his dumpy, copperish-colored mate and he went where the rolling lands gave way abruptly to the rocky lands.

Others did likewise and therefrom dated a cleavage both social and political, between the knob-dwellers, who as time passed grew poorer for the most part, and the slave-owning field-dwellers, who for the most part grew prosperous and very proud of themselves and their country and began putting on the airs of aristocrats. But the hillsmen had their pride, too.

That difference, that division, that contrast, was to persist through the next century and in a measure still persists on into the next century which is this present one. It set men of a common stock off into opposing and antagonistic groups. It mainly made Clay men of the one and Jackson men of the other, since Clay in his time was the leader of the gentry, so called, and Jackson was the god of the poorer ones, the plain people. And after Clay and long after Jackson, it would, in

the great War between Sections, lead armed men to spring at the throats of their own kinsmen and to shed blood that was in some degree at least the very blood that ran in them.

That would be in 1861, many and many a year after Squire Isham Bird was laid away in his grave with his rifle barrel pressing against his nonagenarian shoulder. We're coming to 1861 now.

* III *

AS A HOUSE DIVIDED

ON INTO and past that summer of 1861 the state still maintained the vain pretense and the empty mockery of "armed neutrality"; maintained it officially, that is, not otherwise. Day by day it became more and more a vanity, and yet more of a mocking and an emptiness. Today the harassed governor would by solemn proclamation warn the unheeding "Tennessee volunteers" not to profane the sovereignty of the soil; tomorrow would be answering Lincoln's call for three regiments with an indignant broadside by telegraph—"Kentucky will never furnish troops for the wicked purpose of subduing her sister Southern States." And while his distracted Excellency thus fulminated and thundered, under his very nose and off and away in every corner of the commonwealth, the citizens were organizing for the Separation or for the Union—banding together, enlisting, drilling, equipping, building camps. This now was a household rent against itself—in the mountains along the eastern boundaries sentiment almost solidly for the old order of things, in the extreme western end of the state sentiment for Seces-

sion so overwhelmingly strong that they took to calling that part "Little South Carolina," and hereabouts these richer central portions sundering by districts, by neighborhoods, by families.

Typical of this last was one county whose borders on its widest flank marched with the same meandering river whereon the capital stood. At its county-seat, half a day's ride by horseback from the executive mansion, a squadron was forming for service under that young fellow John Morgan over at Lexington.

There was no secrecy about it. On the contrary, there was a great advertising of it. From week to week a notice was published in the home paper calling for recruits. If a man could not furnish his own mount, a mount would be furnished for him. Report with your weapons at Lillard's general merchandise store on the main street two doors from the Mansion House. Signed, Attila Bird, Rodman Slaughter, Joshua Lillard, J. C. B. Desha, Homer Wickliffe, Patrick Francis Moon, Grundy Bledsoe, *et cetera.*

All day and every day the back end of Lillard's store buzzed like a roused nest of wasps. On the afternoon of a day when it buzzed with a heightened vehemence, a gangling but sinewy youngster named Tyler Watts bored into the core of the nest where, behind a table, there sat a tawny-haired sparely built man some three years or so his senior, and addressing him particularly and the company generally, this youth, Tyler Watts, with the air of one bringing news, cried out:

"Do you know whut? That dam' Unionist crowd—of all the gall I ever heared tell of—they've gone and opened 'em up a muster right down here on the other side of this street not three squares frum here—at Lindsay's harness factory. It's the truth, I tell you-all. I just come frum there. They've got a flag up over the door and ever'thing."

The young man behind the desk, Attila Bird by name, eyed the excited talebearer quizzically.

"You must have overslept yourself, Private Watts," he said dryly, and at this from all about him there was a general sniggering. "Since early this morning the rest of us here have known what you're telling us. Some of us have known for weeks it was bound to happen. We sort of thought they'd probably wait, though, till we moved out before they'd do it. Well, they didn't wait."

"Then whut're you-all settin' here fur?" demanded Watts hotly.

"Minding our own business—and plenty of it for us to mind," answered Bird serenely.

"But ain't you goin' to do nothin'? Air you goin' to let that cussed flag go on flauntin' and wavin' right in our very faces? Ain't you—ain't we—goin' to march down there in a gang and snatch it down? Ain't we goin' to jump 'em right there in their own rat-hole and clean 'em out bodily?"

"Well, now, I'll tell you, Private Watts, about those suggestions of yours: Speaking for all present,

I'll tell you in a minute what we've decided on. But first I'll ask Sergeant Harve Sinclair here to say a few words concerning that flag."

A middle-aged bearded man, the oldest man in view, spoke up.

"Son," he said, "I still can't help frum havin' sort of tender feelin's with reguards to that there old stripetty flag. You see, I marched under her—me and Zach'ry Taylor and some several others—and I fit under her, yas, bled a little bit under her, endurin' of the late war with Mexico. And there's boys here whose daddies and granddaddies fit under her in 1812, and yit further back.

"Son, it ain't that flag we've got a gredge ag'inst, it's the fellers that air bidin' under her now. They're our middlin'-meat, or will be when the fusees start poppin'. But that flag's all hunky-dory. Come to that, she's ez much our'n ez she is their'n. She's fell into bad company for the time bein', that's all. And that ain't her fault, ez I see it and ez all here sees it. So let her flaunt!"

"All right then," argued Watts, "let that p'int pass. But how about cleanin' out that there bunch of traitors to their own land and their own cause?"

"Hasn't a free-born white man got a right to be wrong—if he thinks he's right?" said Bird softly. "It's the brave man who takes sides when taking sides may be dangerous. It's the coward who straddles and waits until he sees which side is the stronger before he shows his colors."

"But there ain't more'n half ez many of 'em ez they is of us. We could handle 'em easy," demurred the newcomer.

"A second reason why we shouldn't go against them," stated Bird. "And a third reason is that we want no bloodshed here on the streets of the town where we live. There'll be enough good American blood spilt before very long to satisfy a butcher, I'm thinking. And a fourth reason is that whichever crowd gets licked in this war is going to need some friends in the winner's camp when they all get back home again. . . . How do you happen to know how many of them there are?"

"I ast questions, that's how. And I went acrost and looked 'em over, close up. Through a window I sort of counted heads."

"Oh, you went across? Well, we decided among ourselves here that until we got away all of us would stay on our side of the street—this side, I mean—and leave them alone on their side. That was an agreement, now it's an order, Private Watts. But you didn't know about its being an order and since you did cross, perhaps you know roughly and can tell us about how many of them have been sworn in. I suppose they're swearing in?"

"Yas, they air. There's about fifty signed up so fur. But they're expectin' more this evenin' and tomorrow, so I hear."

"Fifty, eh? That's more than I'd expected. Still, that's a regular hotbed of northern sympathizers out

by the river. A good many of them are from the Knobs, I take it?"

"Some, but not all. They ain't all trash, by any manner of means. There's some slave-ownin' families —rich families—represented. More'n you'd think fur. That's whut gravels me wuss'n anything almost. F'rinstance now, Roddy"—he was addressing a handsome well-set-up youth—"f'rinstance now, your own cousin, John Brown Fry, he's there in amongst 'em bigger'n life-size, and all swelled-up and chested-out and struttin' like a cock-pigeon."

"Oh, that cousin of mine!" said Rodman Slaughter, and laughed ruefully. "Well, gentlemen, there has to be one black sheep in every flock. But Johnny Boy's our only black sheep. I can say that much for my tribe. His own twin sister has quit speaking to him—swears she never will speak to him again."

"I s'posin' prob'ly you seen my baby brother thar, too—Willie Scarr?" said a hulking farm-hand, reddened and shamefaced. "Derned cantankerous, hardheaded little idiot!"

"I didn't see him but I heared tell he'd reported. But I did see one of 'em that's sorter off-side kinnery of your'n, Tilla—'scuse me, I sh'd say Cap'n Bird. Your fur-distant cousin Jake Bird, he's there. They're talkin' of him fur their commandin' officer—him or Dunc Lindsay one. But Dunc, bein' well-off and havin' went to academy, he's more liable to git it. But whut booklearnin's got to do with fightin', I can't see."

"But you do see how the rest of it is, don't you, Tyler Watts?" asked Attila Bird, his eyelids crinkling humorously. "We're a mixed-up outfit here in the Blue Grass. We can't afford to start trouble yet with our own people."

"But ain't no notice a-tall to be took of them renegades ag'inst our own dear Southland and our own sacred principles?" It was evident that this weedy young man had been listening to partizan orators and from such had imbibed some fine language. "Why, single-handed, I'll bet I kin whup ary two of 'em, all by myself!"

"Don't worry, Tyler." Bird's tone was friendly rather than dictatorial: "You'll probably find fighting a-plenty where we're going. This is not going to be any ninety-day picnic. This war is going to last, that's my guess. Those crazy abolitionists up north may think we'll just get tired and quit of our own accord pretty soon; and some of the fire-eaters farther south than this may deceive themselves into believing a Yankee won't fight you. But we who live here on the debatable ground—we know better than these fellows do what the thing is bound to be. We know it's bound to be bitter and desperate and hard-fought.

"Finally there's this: We, here, are not a mob any longer, nor a crowd even. What any of us might do as individuals we can't do as soldiers. Since yesterday we're a company and by your votes I was elected the captain of this company and from this on we'll have

discipline in the ranks or I'll know the reason why." He was snapping the words out now.

"You forgot to salute just now, Private Watts, when you ran in here in such a swivit. Don't forget next time! But for your own information I may tell that before we ride away tomorrow morning, due and proper notice will be taken of the presence of that headquarters of theirs down at Lindsay's harness factory." Behind his hand he winked to sundry men who shared with him a certain secret. "Now, Lieutenant Slaughter, let's go over those muster-rolls and check up on 'em once more!"

✶ IV ✶

THE YEAR OF '61

IT WAS threatening rain, an overcast but hot morning when, having saddled up in the lot behind the livery-stable adjoining their rendezvous, the troopers rode out upon the highway which ran north and south. There was a symbolism about the way this highway ran. Over it these volunteers would ride today—going south. Over it, also, tomorrow or the next day, perhaps, or some day soon, another file of men would go forth—tramping northward.

Those who went this day were nearly all young men, many of them slim supple boys in their teens. There was little about them to suggest a military unit—no uniforms yet, a mixture of weapons, gay rag-quilts for bedding, pots and pans tied on fore and aft like curious excrescences, like metal malformations.

An effort at moving in squad formation was resulting only in a confused straggle. But every man among them sat his horse easily; was at ease on a horse, that was plainly to be seen. And they had a bugler and a color-bearer, and their leader had a crimson sash bound about his slender waist.

A few were better dressed, better caparisoned, better provided-for than the rest. Three or four had with them black body-servants who were mounted on stout work-horses whereas their masters rode thoroughbred stock. These excited darky boys were grinning broadly, their white teeth showing in their black faces.

For the moment, however, the skylarking spirit which until now had marked their plans for embarking on this gay rollick called going to war was gone from the white troopers. This was good-by for them. Right down the street yonder, lining both sides of the dusty roadway, filling the sidewalks, the front yards, the doors and the windows, their kinspeople and neighbors and friends were waiting; their womenfolk too, wives and mothers and sisters and sweethearts and, in a few instances, daughters—all waiting to bid them good-by and wave to them and cheer for them and watch them cantering away under these lowering clouds to join forces with that young fellow Morgan's men.

They passed the Mansion House, passed the courthouse, passed the center of things where the crowds were thickest. On beyond there, the head of the column came abreast of Lindsay's harness factory and then their newly chosen captain gave the order to halt. He turned his mare so that he looked toward a clump of men, fifty or sixty of them, who massed on the narrow bricked sidewalk upon the left.

The looks upon the faces of these grouped men were watchful, in some instances sullen, in one or two cases

obviously apprehensive—not daunted but uneasy. They were all very quiet. Perhaps half of them were armed. Fowling-pieces and rifles were in their hands, pepper-box pistols and derringers and butcher-knives in belts about their middles. Above their heads a small United States flag hung limp and skimpy in the heat.

In the forward row of them was young Duncan Lindsay, gallant and debonair and smartly groomed, a recent graduate of an eastern college. He was smiling slightly—a smile with nervousness behind it.

Alongside him and topping him by half a head, stood Jacob Bird, a spindly but wiry-looking figure, with very black eyes and a swarthy skin and—strange complement for such coloring—a crop of pale reddish hair. He was bareheaded and in his shirt-sleeves. He was not smiling. As the riders swung about, facing his party, Jacob Bird's right hand closed on the grip of a heavy cap-and-ball pistol that was shoved into his waistband.

Attila Bird caught the movement and the menace that was in it. He threw up his right arm, the palm of the hand outward and open in a gesture that was part a salute, part a hail.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he said, in his high-pitched whimsical voice, "I crave your indulgence. For myself and for these gentlemen here"—he indicated his companions—"I have something to say to you."

"We'll be glad to hear anything you care to say—within bounds," replied young Lindsay, still smiling. From behind him came a mutter of assent.

"I shall endeavor to keep within bounds, thank you," returned Bird. "As you may have heard, gentlemen, we purpose going away today. We understand that you shortly contemplate a departure—in the opposite direction from ours. We are all of us—you who stand there, we who sit here—Kentuckians. Most of us grew up together in this old county. We have been playmates, schoolmates, neighbors, friends. Some of us are kinfolks."

He let his eyes flicker toward his frowning cousin, then sideways and rearward to where his younger brother, Don Carlos Bird, in the ranks behind him bestrode a restless prancing gelding.

"We are parting now. It may be for a long time. When next we meet—if we do meet—it may be that we'll look upon one another's faces through gunpowder smoke. And not all of us are coming back again, either. So, gentlemen, we have stopped today to bid you farewell and to wish for each one of you good luck and a safe return even though we do not wish your cause good luck. We claim there's neither treason nor disloyalty there. We are hoping that for your part you feel the same toward us. Will you shake hands with us?"

"We'll do more than that, Attila Bird!" shouted Duncan Lindsay, his voice suddenly grown husky and tremulous, and with a graceful sweeping bow, off came his new black hat of shiny varnished straw. "We'll give you a real genuine Kentucky yell as you go away."

Bird spurred his horse forward. "Jake!" he cried out in a half-bantering tone as he bent in the saddle. "I'll start with you—away back yonder we budded from the same vine. Turn loose the butt of that silly pop-gun and touch flesh with me."

But Jake Bird seemed not to hear him. He was wriggling back into the press behind him—the only man of his company who pressed rearward. The rest all shoved forward, their hands outstretched, their features atwitch and working.

With a jostled clatter from pendent frying-pans and a battered coffee-pot, a blocky equestrian—one Gabe Scarr—slid off his plow-horse. Blubbering loudly, he roughly seized a seventeen-year-old weepy-eyed boy out of the huddle of the Federalists and squeezed him to his breast.

"You derned stubborn deluded little fool!" he exclaimed. "You mind whut mammy told you and you take good keer of yourse'f. 'Cause ef you don't, I'm a-goin' to—I'm a-goin' to—" He glared over his brother's shoulder. "Dunc Lindsay, gol-dern you, you look out fur this here little fool. Don't you let nothin' happen to him. 'Cause ef you do I'm a-goin' to flail the daylights out of you next time I see you. I kin lick you, Dunc Lindsay, the best day you ever seen, and you know it. So you act like I'm a-tellin' you ef you know whut's good fur your hide."

"I'll look after him, Gabe," answered Lindsay, his shaky laugh rising clear in the tumult of it all.

"By God, Dunc Lindsay, you'd better!"

They broke grips, fell apart, either faction whooping hoarsely. The troopers re-formed, went off down the hoof-pocked road in a thumping hand-gallop, their little standard whipping out, their bugle sounding, the dust rising and swirling until its gray curtain hid the twinkling feet of the horses. Their shapes diminished in the humid distance and the bugle note came back to the ears of these they were leaving behind them as a thin faint trickle of music; and a countrywoman in a bunchy black calico frock ran out into the middle of Main Street and stood there, her arms widely and stiffly extended in the posture of one nailed to a cross, and bleated and screamed.

"He's gone!" she was proclaiming. "He's gone. My onliest boy child is gone frum me—gone, gone, gone!"

The sound of her grief rose in a shrill screech. She stood there, the living cruciform, vulgar, elemental, a heart-breaking, a heart-broken spectacle.

Down from her veranda and out into the roadway came swiftly Mrs. Judge Bledsoe, who was dignified and cultured, a Roman mother among mothers, one who was credited with having said grimly, just the week before, "Mine tell me they're ready and waiting. If they don't go, I'm going to kill them with my own hands; and if they do go, it's going to kill me." She had said it smilingly, while blinking very fast to keep back the tears. That morning, dry-eyed and outwardly placid, she had seen them depart.

Now she strove to take this countrywoman in her arms and comfort her.

"I've sent three of mine off," she said, "all I had. I sent them proudly, gladly. I wish I had more sons to give. . . . Come along with me, won't you? Come on into my house. We'll lock the door and draw the blinds —and have a good cry together. I've just been saving up for a good cry."

But the stretch-armed countrywoman was not to be comforted. Her woe was for all the visible world to see.

"You've got three," she answered. "You're rich in sons. I'm poor—I ain't got only jist the one. Let loose of me. Let me be, you woman. I can't bear it—oh, I can't bear it! He's gone, he's gone!"

Quite near by was another countrywoman and this one did not sob or wail, but with a sudden terrible fierceness pounced on a gaunt man, downcast and stern-looking, who until now had kept himself half hidden behind one of the tall wooden pillars of the court-house with his hungry eyes staring at that diminishing dust cloud to the southward. She plucked at him and clutched him by both sleeves and dragged him bodily, he silently resisting, down the steps and out into the open.

"All my life till this minute I've minded you, James Menifee," she declared in a tone so loud and so harsh that all near by turned to see what new interruption this might be. "Because I'm your lawful wedded wife, I've minded you in all things. But now, for onc't, you're goin' to do ez I say, not ez you say."

As though for vindication of her disobedience, she turned to those about them.

"Because he holds by the Union, he wouldn't give our boy his blessin', not even today," she told them. "He wouldn't say nothin' a-tall to him, not a single word. He wanted that I shouldn't come in to tell him good-by. But when I was gone he sneaked off and followed along behind me, unbeknownst—this man, my husband, my Hal's father, and him a preacher!" She shook the man so violently that he rocked back and forth on his heels.

"You're a preacher, ain't you? You call yourself a preacher of the Gospel! All right then, you pray to your God that He'll send our Hal back safe and sound. You pray, I tell you!"

"Loose your holts on me, woman, and I'll pray," he said.

She released him. He did not kneel—your itinerant preacher of those days and of the Primitive Baptist persuasion did not kneel—but he closed his eyes and lifted his face toward the murky skies, and in a quick hush which had fallen on this particular group he began.

"O Merciful Father," he prayed, "in this, the dreadfulest hour of its need, save Thou this here beloved Union of ours. Preserve it, O Lord, frum them that wouldst destroy it. Don't let traitors tear down and tromple on this Union that was boughten and paid fur with the blood of our fathers. Don't—"

She reattacked him. She shook him more shrewishly

than before. "Not that, not that!" she bade him. "It's him you got to pray fur, here and now!"

He went on: "O Lord God, save this Union, like I just now ast you, but O dear God, save also this here woman's misguided son, her—" He faltered, his voice cracking and choking, then in a great strong voice of pleading: "Yes, God, our son, our first-born! Spare him, God, and send him back to her—to us—to me, God! Send my boy back to me! Fur the sake of Your own begotten Son, Jesus Christ, amen!"

When the others there looked once more to the south, the little dust cloud was gone.

* V *

THE YEAR OF '65

FOUR years of it, nearly, and in the spring of the fourth year of that war, on a showery coolish morning, Private Don Carlos Bird lay face downward on the wet and muddied earth in what had been a fence corner, with his feet to a smoldering fire of fence rails. Two years of riding with Morgan's Raiders; one year of a northern prison where he caught dysentery and jail fever and the vermin fed on him; then exchanged and through this last year serving here in Virginia with a Louisiana foot-regiment—that had been this soldier's record.

He was a seasoned veteran, a man who had seen a dozen pitched battles and skirmishes past counting, and he was not yet twenty-one years old. He was in fact a worn-out, starving boy and he was crying bitterly. He was crying partly from weakness but mainly because, the day before, Lee had surrendered. He was a rack of bones, a rag scarecrow, a famished half-naked shell of a thing, and his weeping wrenched his frame.

"Hello there, Reb," said a voice, speaking almost over him. From the pillow of his folded wasted arms,

he lifted a begrimed and streaked face that was fuzzed over with straggly whiskers. One of the victorious blue-bellies, a heavy man, heavily burdened, well-fed-looking, in a whole but weather-beaten uniform, was standing above him. Bird stared from under his long matted hair and said nothing. There was nothing for him to say.

The Yankee grinned—gloatingly, the other thought.

"Hello, young Reb," he said again. "If you feel like you look, I'd say you must be feelin' purty dauncy?"

"God dam' you!" Bird said. "If you've come here to laugh at me and taunt at me, I'll kill you!" Feebly and very slowly, he was getting to his knees.

"Hold your horses, buddy. I didn't come here to laugh at you, not specially, I didn't. I come here under orders to find you."

"Orders to find me? I've surrendered—or my general has."

"Well, leastwise, orders was to find some such a lookin' Johnny as you are. You 'pear to fill the bill about as well as any I've seen. Tell me something: About how long is it since you had a real square fillin' meal of shore-nuff human vittles in you?"

"What business is that of yours?"

"Makin' it my business. Go on, tell me, son. I'm right wishful to know."

"I can't hardly remember, it's so far back. During the last two weeks I lived mostly on parched corn—until my gums and teeth got too sore. The last meat I

had was about a week ago when I killed a rat in a corn-crib where I was sleeping and cooked him on a ram-rod."

"Sort of thought as much; anyhow, my colonel did. Colonel Trautman, Nineteenth Pennsylvania volunteers —that's him. He had the idee." While he was saying these things the stranger was wriggling out of his soiled canvas pack and undoing it and producing a skillet, a blackened pot, then various small wrapped parcels. "Yep, the colonel he says to all us boys for each one to draw him a double ration this mornin' and go find a hungry Johnny and go sheers with him on breakfast. So you're the one I found and from the signs I'd say I've got me about the prize specimen of the hull lot of you.

"You jest lay still and leave me kick up some of these here live chunks till they get blazin' good and 'bout ten minutes from now you and me are goin' to be eatin'. Here's sow-belly and here's hardtack bisquits—I'll be soakin' them soft—and here's some coffee and here's some sugar and now then, by gummies, if here ain't a chunk of salt-horse!"

"Hush up your talking, I can't stand it!" cried Bird. "And pardner, for God's sake hurry!" It was his mouth that watered now, not his eyes. His stomach was grinding and twisting inside him as though it might have a separate life of its own.

Presently there was breakfast. The Yankee didn't eat much although he seemed a man who ordinarily

might prove a willing gormandizer. Bird did most of the eating. As the saying goes, he wolfed the food down. In his case it was a true saying. He crowded the greasy half-cooked bacon into his slobbering mouth so fiercely, one huge bite on another, that his mouth gorged and overflowed and big pieces were spewed out for lack of room; and of his first tin cup of coffee he spilled more down his bearded chin than passed into his greedy and gulping throat. But over his next two cups he took more time.

Having eaten, a false strength came to him. He stood on his legs; collected himself; made ready to move off.

"What you fixin' to do now?" asked his late host.

"I'm going home," said Bird. "At least I'm heading for there. I reckon there's nothing else for me to do—this war's about over, I figure. I haven't seen my home for it's going on three years and nine months now."

"Where is home for you, cumrud?"

"West of here—almost due west, I'd say."

"How far west?"

"A matter of three hundred miles, I'd guess off-hand."

"Calculate to ride or walk?"

"Walk."

"*Humph!*"

The Northerner was squinting at Bird's feet. They were wrapped in ravelly torn scraps of sacking and from these wrappings the toes showed, crusted with dried dirt, scabby with dried blood.

"Here, wait a bit, cumrud," said the Federal. He hunkered down on a pile of rails and undid the clasps of his heavy cowhide half-boots and drew the boots off. Then, after a brief consideration, he also took off his thick cotton socks which were new and originally had been white but now were loud-smelling and caked with damp dust.

"Here," he said, "you take and wear these here. I ain't requirin' 'em—I got a still better pair of brogans in my traps jest over there where we're camped."

The transfer was made. Dry-shod, young Bird went limping across the trampled miry field. The older man, barefooted, stood watching him go. Bird had traveled perhaps fifty rods before it occurred to him that he had not thanked his benefactor, had not even learned the benefactor's name. He looked back.

The big Yankee was staring at him. The big Yankee did a funny thing. He straightened stiffly and his right hand came up to the brim of his blue fatigue cap in a sharp and snappy salute. Having done this, he stooped, with a sort of furtive guilty air as though he had done something to be ashamed of, and began collecting his mess-kit.

Down in the heart of the shattered and collapsed Confederacy, in a district of piny woods, empty weed-grown cotton-fields and red-clay gullies, a district which lay just over the Georgia line on the South Carolina side, Colonel Attila Bird rode with his regiment. It was

still called a regiment; it was of the strength of perhaps a company and a half. Now it was on its own, as the catchwords are, but until the day before it had been acting as escort to a fugitive cabinet fleeing southward from Richmond and also as guard to the Confederate Treasury so called, which mainly was a deficit and largely was a joke.

So far as its commander and the members of his command knew, theirs was the last remaining unit of troops under organization and discipline east of the Mississippi River. The country was full of soldiers, though, not traveling as they were but singly or in small bodies—stragglers, paroled men, deserters, discharged prisoners, mustered-out men. The country bore surprisingly few evidences of war, having been well off the scourged track of Sherman's march and out of the main areas of foraging and fighting. Physically, it was unscathed, but idleness lay on it like a blight.

This skeleton regiment on its crow-bait horses rode past a forlorn homestead where a drove of razorbacks rooted in an unfenced sedge-field.

"McCloskey," said young Colonel Bird—he being now twenty-seven years old—to his acting adjutant, "here's where we feast high. Bore one of those shotes."

The sounds of McCloskey's shooting brought an elderly woman out of the unpainted farmhouse. She charged down to the red-clay road, berating them vigorously for scoundrels and robbers.

"Ain' it bad enough we'll be at the mussy of the first

bunch of Yanks that'll come this way, without our own soldiers preyin' on the little that's been left to us?" she demanded. "The South's licked, all our boys are comin' home, so why can't you boys do the same thing?"

"Madam," Colonel Bird answered her and, so doing, jauntily lifted the battered wreck of a slouch hat to which a wispy blob of black ostrich-feather still adhered—"madam, pardon me, but the South has not been licked. The South merely wore itself out whipping the North and had to quit from sheer exhaustion."

"Don't try to soft-soap me. That's my hawg you've went and stole. Where-all do you boys come frum?"

"From Kentucky, madam, at your service."

"Well, why don't you put out and go on back to Kentucky then? The war's done over."

"Madam"—and Colonel Bird's smile was very gentle —"South Carolina started this war but Kentucky has undertaken the job of closing it out. Madam, good day to you and thanks for your hospitality. McCloskey, detail some pall-bearers to bring along the deceased."

They clumped away singing the tune of "If You Want to Have a Good Time Jine the Cavalry."

So far as they were concerned, they did close out that war three days later when they found somebody holding yet to some poor shrunken shreds of authority and purporting to speak for a government which no longer had the substance of a government but merely was a shadow of it and a name. Thereafter they followed the pig lady's advice—they put out for home.

* VI *

THE HOME-COMING

IT WAS not exactly a coincidence that the two brothers, the one jogging northward out of the Carolinas, the other trudging westward from Appomattox, should meet and join for the last lap of their homeward journeys. On the part of one of them it was by design that they met.

Nursing his worn-down mount along, Colonel Bird came up out of Tennessee, moving by slow stages. He had his oath of reallegiance in his pocket and practically nothing else. The reckless gaiety which had buoyed him through those last desperate and despairing campaigns had left him. About him there was a sort of matured soberness as though all of a sudden he had grown middle-aged before his time.

In later years, like so many others similarly circumstanced, he would reclaim a measure of his squandered youthfulness, would have high spirits again and a great zest for living. Now he looked old, felt very old, very tired.

On a day which was the second day after he had emerged out of the foot-hills on the eastern edge of the

blue-grass section, he found his younger brother sitting by a milestone at a crossing where roads forked. The capacity for emotion temporarily had been drained out of both of them. Their greeting was quiet, almost casual.

"Day before yesterday I ran into Major Clode and two or three others heading for Anderson County," explained Don. "He told me you were coming along close behind him. So I sat down to wait for you. Sitting down suits me. I did my share of walking—and running—this past year or so."

Side by side, the colonel leading his stumbling horse, the brothers traveled that day and, traveling, exchanged experiences, commented on the decayed, neglected aspect of the country, spoke much of the past and very little of future prospects. In their hearts they still were soldiers; the civilian view-point had not reentered them.

"I've heard one or two pieces of gossip that'll interest you," said Don presently. "That half-way quarter-breed great-uncle of ours—old Giles Bird—is in the state senate from our district. He's the oldest man in it and the bitterest, so I hear—would like to hang all of us Seceshes to a sour-apple tree."

"He never was a particularly sunny-tempered person, old man Giles wasn't," commented Attila. "There's that spatter of Indian blood in his strain."

"Losing Jake didn't sweeten up his nature much, I reckon, either," said Don. "Jake was his favorite grandson; he set big store by him."

"Losing Jake, you say? How did Jake get lost?"

"Killed at Kenesaw Mountain—plugged right through the head."

"So?" answered Attila indifferently. It was not that he was cold-blooded or calloused; but seeing men killed, hearing of other men being killed—these things had been his daily portion for so long.

Then after a bit he added: "Well, I was in that Kenesaw Mountain rookus myself—got a Minié ball through the calf of one leg there. For all I know, Jake may have been facing me from just across the line."

"I've never even so much as been scratched or grazed, let alone a real wound," said Don Carlos. "I reckon the lead to kill me hasn't been molded yet."

"Now it never will be," said Attila.

"Your sweetheart's still waiting for you," said Don Carlos. "I heard that yesterday."

"I knew she would—Sally's the kind that sticks," said Attila. "I want to get married the very first thing. Lord knows what I've got left to get married on though!"

They slept that night at the roadside under his pair of threadbare blankets, breakfasted next morning at a shanty where an old black woman gave them a share of what she had—sorghum and pone-bread.

About ten o'clock the two were skirting the belt of broken lands along the river, taking turns about in the saddle. As they went down into a tiny shut-in valley, Attila, whose turn it was to ride, said:

"Well, we're nearly there. When we get to the top of the next hill we'll be able to see the chimneys on the home place—if the trees haven't leafed out too thick. Six miles more of this—and then home! Boy, think of it—home!"

But at the bottom, just as they were passing an abandoned shanty which stood among brambles on the shore of a small branch, shots came from one bushy fringe of the little ravine, hitting both of them. Attila had his side-arms—two heavy pistols in his saddle-holsters, his officer's sword girthed about him. Don was without weapons of any sort.

The colonel drew and fired back swiftly in the direction from which the shots had come, and heard a grunt and a threshing in the brush. Under a scattering fire he dropped off and half carried, half dragged his brother out of the road and over to the shack where they took refuge beneath the floor, sheltered behind the log ends on which it was propped.

Attila was wounded in the fleshy part of one shoulder, Don in the neck, slightly, and through the ankle. It was the latter wound which had crippled him. But it was a third wound, of which he was not even aware—a glancing shot which pierced his thigh on the inner side and opened the big artery there—which caused him to bleed to death where he lay beneath the sagged sills of the hut and directly behind Attila.

The latter, concerned with replying to the fire of their unseen assailants, knew nothing of this. When

finally the bushwhackers drew off without ever having shown themselves, he looked back and there was the boy stretched out in a red puddle, dead.

The identity of the murderers was never definitely established. But the section had for years been harassed by a band of so-called regulators—guerrillas, really—who among Unionists professed to favor the Union and among Confederate sympathizers claimed to be for the South, but who preyed indiscriminately on whosoever was weak or defenseless or unprotected. Lately and outwardly, they had been all for the Union.

Afterwards Colonel Bird used to say that the bullet which he carried deeply imbedded in his left shoulder muscles, and which worked back and forth and bothered him sometimes during a change of weather, might possibly be a souvenir from a distant relative—for at least one of the younger Birds out of the Knobs had ranged with these coat-turning outlaws.

Nor was it ever known what the motive for the ambushing had been. Whether the assassins were actuated by a wanton desire to kill or whether they coveted the horse which Attila rode, no one definitely might say.

In any event, the marauders drew off without taking the horse. The animal was standing in the road when the colonel finally emerged from hiding; and, unaided, he somehow managed to heave his brother's slack body across the saddle and tie it there, he staggering alongside and holding on during those remaining six miles; and that was the manner of their home-coming.

✱ VII ✱

BIRD & SON

IT WAS pretty hard on Colonel Bird, the job of readjusting himself to a peace which was by no means peaceful. Against him, as against the majority of his recent comrades-in-arms, there stood handicaps; their former slaves disorganized and uprooted, drifting like lost sheep, and for the most part unwilling to work; the mischiefs soon to be done by the Freedmen's Bureau and it fraudulently keeping alive the fictional prospect of "forty acres and a mule" for every ex-bondsman; black troops with shining bayonets yet on duty in districts which by the interpretations of certain provost marshals remained unpacified—districts which never could be pacified until those same black troops and those same bright bayonets were withdrawn; martial law pressing heavily on the land; threats of further confiscations of the property of those "lately in rebellion"; many men proscribed; a few men, recently leaders but now outlawed, gone to foreign parts; irregular bands of so-called vigilantes—a little later they would dub themselves the Ku Klux—seeking to bring order out of chaos and only making the chaos more chaotic;

then the smaller annoyances, the petty tyrannies of local satraps; and yet lesser things, but persistent plaguing things, which swarmed and multiplied and stung like gadflies—oh, even here in a state which, technically at least, had never quitted the Union, there was among the vanquished a plenitude of causes for concern.

And Lincoln, the compassionate man, dead; and Johnson, the violent man and the vacillating, roaring and scolding and quarreling in the White House; and Davis lying with chains on him in a cell at Fortress Monroe. And Congress dominated by Thad Stevens and by dour old Jim Lane and Sumner, the vengeful. And talk of "reconstruction" and "conquered provinces" in the air up yonder at Washington. And new ominous words creeping into the language—"carpet-bagger," for instance, and "scalawag"—words which were ugly-sounding to start with and would in time, to southern ears, become the ugliest and the most odious words ever spoken.

It chafed Colonel Bird that he, who had fought fairly and had taken the oath in good faith, still should be disfranchised, still should lie under disqualifying bans and bounds. It chafed him that his place should be so run-down, and he, for lack of funds and lack of labor, helpless to remedy this.

He had a widowed mother to look out for and a wife already and a child expected. Within a week after his return he had married pretty demure Sally Grover and she, who eight months before had been a bride, now

was about to bear him a babe. By nature he was energetic, had in him the craving to be up and doing. But he had no business, he had no profession; and had he had one, unless it were the profession of medicine, he might not openly practice it.

It irked him to sit by with idle hands while debts piled up, while his credit stretched and at the same time shrank, while his six hundred rich acres went to seed—and weedseed at that. Still, weeds could not altogether take the pastures away from the blue-grass. That was one good thing about it: There were fields where the blue-grass grew ranker than the cheating weeds did. In a warm April following a rainy spell, it would grow taller than a colt's hoofs in twenty-four hours; that was the claim they made for it.

One winter's day—it was in the winter of '65-'66—he came in from bird-shooting, with his old pointer bitch at his heels, and having left his bag of game at the kitchen, which was a separate building joined to the main house by a short flagged walk, he came around the house and sat down on the top step of the wide deep porch in the mild, almost balmy afternoon sunshine. His dog was dozing at his feet while her tail—which bled where she had threshed it in the brier patches seeking out scattered single quail from flushed coveys—automatically went *thump-thump-thump* against the board tread.

The board badly needed repainting. All the framework needed paint, and the metalwork, too. The face of

the building, being of mellowed, weathered red brick, looked, in contrast with its trim, fine and good. It was a house built after the approved early Virginia pattern, with round wooden pillars, with shutters for all the windows excepting the upper front windows which, being set high under the overhang of the portico, had, instead of shutters, small wrought-iron balconies jutting out like flower brackets from the wall. Bird's Nest was the name of this place, a name bestowed upon it by its founder.

Leading down to the turnpike there ran, at either side of a driveway, a row of trees, honey-locusts and black walnuts alternating. The colonel's grandfather, having built the house and christened it, then had planted these trees. Myriads of dried brown seed-pods, like the pods of enormously overgrown beans, dangled from the locusts, whereas the walnuts constantly shed down their big nuts cased in blackened hulls. Yellowish-green leaves still clung to the lower limbs of the walnut trees, but the locusts were by now quite bare except for their pods and their clusters of long wicked thorns.

As Colonel Bird sat there in the thinning December sunlight and felt the evening chill sharpen the air, he saw a friend of his, one Captain Felix Joseph O'Shea, lately of the Orphan Brigade, turn in at the opened double gates and stride briskly up the drive toward him. He rose to greet the newcomer, who was a shabby but somehow dapper individual.

"Great news, Tilla Bird," called out Captain O'Shea jubilantly, when still fifty feet from him. "Great news from Frankfort. It just came and I've stopped by, hoofing it out from town, to tell you. That blanket amnesty bill passed today—passed both houses with a whoop. We're free men once more—every single dam' disability is lifted. We're citizens of Kentucky and of the republic!"

He drew nearer, still proclaiming the word:

"Oh, there'll be a howl from the Radicals in Congress that you could hear nine miles off—but the divil and all with them! What can they do? It was Union men behind a Unionist governor who put that blessed bill through the legislature today—but good Democrats, thank God for it, even if they are Unionists. So let the Black Republicans up north rave their heads off."

"May they choke on their own ravings," said Colonel Bird. "This thing calls for a celebration, O'Shea." He motioned toward the door of his house. "There're materials on my sideboard. How did the vote stand?"

"In the house it carried by sixty-two to thirty-two; in the senate, by twenty-two to twelve—practically two to one."

"I can guess who, in the senate, cast one vote in opposition—my venerable but off-colored and unesteemed distant connection, the Honorable Giles Bird?"

"He did."

"He would."

"Never mind that clabbered old mongrel or whatever it is he is. Never mind any of the rest of that soured and bigoted minority. They'll all be snowed under next election—if any one of them dares to run. We're back in the saddle again, Tilla—free men and back in the saddle and rearing to go."

"Yes, we're free, as you say. And I'm glad of that. And I'm proud that Kentuckians have proved to the nation that no matter what sectional differences may have been dividing us a year ago, we're ready now to stand together against all the world and the government—yes, if it comes to that, against the standing army of the United States. But God pity our people farther south than this!"

"Amen to that, too," said Captain O'Shea piously. "You never spoke truer words in your life . . . Tilla, what's delaying that entertainment you just mentioned? I'm shouting-happy tonight. Tomorrow I'm going to reopen that law office of mine. Bright and early I'll have a darky in there, dusting the dust off my law books and kindling up a fire in the rusty old grate and washing the dirt and the cobwebs off the window-panes. And I'm going to start running for office, too, right away."

"What office?"

"I haven't decided yet. But the point is I'm going to run. I aim to get the bulge on about a thousand other fellows who'll be taken with the same craving. I'll run on my Confederate record, that'll be enough. From the

sentiment that's springing up, it looks like Kentucky waited until the war was over before she decided to secede. What are you aiming to do?"

"That's the trouble with me—I don't know yet. I've got to work it out. I'm troubled in my mind about it. . . . Well, let's go inside and wet those tumblers."

In the long and rather bare and cheerless-looking old dining-room, Colonel Bird was presently mixing two toddies. They had taken their first congratulatory drams down straight; now they would have a couple of toddies. He mixed them very carefully.

"How is your good lady, suh?" asked Captain O'Shea, becoming all at once mannered and ceremonious and speaking in the sonorous measured voice which subsequently, and on a not-far-distant day, he would uplift in a hall of the National Congress to champion the cause of the throttled and prostrate Cotton States.

"Doing splendidly, thank you, all things considered."

"And the great event—*ah hem?*" Captain O'Shea, who could on occasion roar like the very lions of the jungle, coughed delicately. "When, if I might make so bold as to ask, is the great event to take place?"

"We figure that she will be confined within the next six weeks or so. Gad, Felix, but I'm hoping my first child is a man child! Well, I've got a presentiment that it will be so; I'll bet you a purty I'm right. Even when I was nothing but a shaver, the darkies on the place said I had the gift sometimes of second sight. So I'm prophesying a boy—a lusty fine boy."

"I rejoice, suh, in your prospective good fortune." Captain O'Shea was still using the ritualistic tone. "And this boy, now—the young gentleman will, I presume, bear your own honored name!"

"He will not—not if I have any say-so in the matter." The colonel was smiling, his eyelids wrinkling in a characteristic way they had. "My mother, God bless her, went in for fancy names. Historical names for her sons, high-flown names out of poetry-books for her daughters—that was her pet notion. I reckon maybe she wanted to get away, as far as she could, from the Biblical names and the homely old English names that our forebears in this country were usually saddled with. Anyhow, mine were saddled with 'em.

"You know what the fad was here in this region a generation behind us. I take it our good mothers aimed to prove that we belonged to the quality folks now. So when we were too little to protest, they toted us up to the baptismal font and the terrible deed was done."

"Not the Irish, though," interjected his friend. "As long as the calendar of the saints holds out we're provided for."

"But look how it was with us: I had a brother named Montezuma—he died in infancy: the burden was too much for him, I reckon. And one named Charlemagne—think of packing that load around with you!—and a scary colt dragged him to death in that back lot just yonder by Bird's Fork when he was twelve. And there was Don Carlos, poor boy, who went this past spring—

you know how. And my younger sister, who was Alfaretta, died at sixteen in the flower of her girlhood.

"And my older sister, Juanita—Mrs. Ringo, over at Danville, you know?—she loses her husband and turns into a crank on this crazy impossible temperance issue and actually, I honestly believe, would like to forget her sex and go around making speeches on the subject. Of course she never will but she comes right out and threatens to, sometimes. It's enough almost to make you suspect her of being touched. And I'm Attila, the only one of the male line that's left to carry on the breed.

"I figure there's bad luck in such naming as we had. So, with my boy that's waiting to be born upstairs, I'm going back once more to the Scriptures. He'll be plain Isham Bird—for his granddaddy, who built this house, and for his great-granddaddy, old Squire Bird, who came out through the Gap with a rifle in one fist and a demijohn in the other, and had the foresight to grab off this sweet little piece of outdoors from the Indians."

"I drink then to your son and heir—to Isham Bird, the third—and to your good lady, suh, and to your long life and prosperity and to theirs."

Captain O'Shea left no heel-taps but only the dregs of the sugar-sirup at the bottom. "That's excellent sour mash," he stated; "most excellent sour mash, indeed. Of your own private stock, doubtless?"

"Yes, you might say I inherited it. Lord knows how many years it's been aging in the wood. My grand-

daddy made it for family and neighborhood consumption—you know—farm whisky, as some of the old-timers still call it. He was a master hand, they say, at that sort of thing. He should have been; after he was well along in life he perfected his art under Mysterious Jimmy Crow down on Glen's Creek. And all the time I was off with the army soldiering, mother managed to keep about ten barrels of it—the last ten barrels that we owned—hidden away from thirsty prowlers and Yankee foragers.

"I reckon, in a way of speaking, she had to keep it hidden away from Juanita, too, who'd like to see every good red drop of it spilt out on the ground and wasted, she having gone daft on the question of drinking, as I was just now telling you. She's got the delusion in her head that whisky is the curse of every other generation amongst us—that one generation makes the stuff and that some promising member of the next generation ruins himself trying to drink it all up. Well, my father drank too much, as I'll admit and you'll remember."

The ex-infantryman nodded gravely. "But held it, suh, like a gentleman always."

"Oh, of course. But nevertheless he let it kill him finally—that is, if good likker ever really killed anybody. Still, he died in his prime. . . . Well, anyhow, I've still got about ten barrels, pretty near it, tucked away."

"You are vastly favored. I envy you. I've been dependent on Gip Purdy's grocery for my supply, and Gip's stock of tavern goods is pretty sorry stuff—rank

and poor. But even so, no poorer than my standing on his books has got to be, these past six months."

"Then by all means have another toddy. And if my darky boy Dave can rustle up a jug around the pantry somehow, perhaps you'll let me send you over a couple of gallons or so?"

"Will I let you? Bird, you offer me liquid rubies of great price. To be able to make such likker was a most precious gift; to hold a quantity of it is to own a most precious treasure. And for somebody to resume making it would be a precious boon to humanity. Need I say more?"

Suddenly the colonel's eyes were glistening. "You've said enough, Felix, and you've given me an idea—this very minute you gave it to me. And I'm much beholden to you for it." He raised aloft the decanter that he held in his hand.

"I would say the gratitude is all on my part. But how have I given you an idea?"

"Why, by what you just said. Felix, it's an inspiration. I'm going to set up as a regular distiller—commercially, I mean. I'm going into the business of making good Bourbon."

"But this infernal excise tax that the Abolitionists put on likker during the war as a revenue measure—to help raise money to help beat us—mind you, a tax that's collectable at the source and not at the public market-place, as it used to be—isn't that calculated to cripple you?"

"Felix, don't curse a blessing in disguise. My guess is that before long that new law, if it's enforced, will cut off the illicit supply from here and there and everywhere and increase the demand for properly made stuff coming through channels that are legitimate and licensed. Besides, didn't thousands of Federal soldiers—from the East, from the North, from the Northwest and even from the Far West—didn't they get the taste, whilst they were down here fighting us, for genuine Bourbon—the best whisky that ever was made anywhere? They surely did, if they had any sense at all. Why, man, the market's ready-made and waiting—this war made it."

"Perhaps you are right. At any rate, kindly put me down as your first customer. Inscribe my name on the ledger, at the top of the page, suh, like Abou-ben-Adhem, whose name led all the rest."

"I know I'm all right—I feel it in my bones. But you needn't be in such a hurry about opening an account, Felix. I've got to raise some working capital to start with. Well, now that the halters and hobbles are off of us and some few of the smarter negroes are showing signs of settling down and behaving themselves, land values will soon be going back where they properly belong. I ought to be able to put a fair-sized mortgage on this place. Tobe Lander in town—he's got ready money to put out—at a price."

"Trash!" and Captain O'Shea snorted. "Pure trash of the trashiest."

"True, but mark you, man, trash with cash. The bottom-sill is on the top for the time being. Remember, if you please, it was the trimmers and the dodgers and the shufflers who stayed at home and took their profits after Johnny had gone for a sojer. Right here in this county men are holding office who couldn't have been elected dog-pelter before things got turned upside down."

"Don't worry. 'There's a great day a-comin' in the mawnin'.' Turn the rascals out—that's to be the motto from this time out."

"Turn 'em out, by all means. But meanwhile we have to deal with conditions as they are, not as they should be. I, for one, shall deal with Br'er Fox Lander. . . . By Jove, I've just hatched another notion: Down yonder on the creek bank less than a quarter of a mile from here, there's still standing what's left of the old blockhouse that the first Isham—Old High Pockets, as they called him—built for a protection against the savages. And in there was where his son, the second Isham, set up his little old copper still and his little horse-mill for grinding the grain. He had a capacity of a barrel a day when he was running; that's the legend in the family.

"Now then, I'm going to build my plant on the same identical site, once I get that far along—going to keep alive the family tradition and follow the ancient precedents, eh? Last time I peeped inside the ruins some of the old mash-tubs were still there, rotting and

dropping apart, and yet, after all these years, you still could catch a faint whiff of that old aroma clinging to the wood like a perfume—like a beautiful old perfume, Felix O'Shea. . . . But while I'm palavering here over these lovely day-dreams of mine, that next round of toddies is being held up. Your pardon for the delay."

The dusk had changed to darkness when Captain O'Shea went thence, lifting his feet high and stepping with care, as he marched down the drive between the trees, but carrying his cargo as a gentleman should. His farewell had been most Celtically effusive. Overhearing it, you might have thought he was leaving this friend of his for years and perhaps forever.

As for the colonel, he supped alone, with a honed appetite, in the barren high-ceilinged dining-room, and for his supper had the historic four *h*'s of a central Kentucky household. He had ham, hominy, hoe-cake and honey, all spread before him at once; and the ham had been hickory-cured in his own smoke-house and the hominy also was home-made, having been leached of its outer armor with a steeping of lye from wood-ashes—big bluish-white grains which seemed to refute the laws of physics by smoking more freely when they were stone-cold than when they were heated.

After supper he went upstairs where his young wife, big and unwieldy with his child, took her ease in their bedchamber, tended by an elderly negress called Mom Aggie. He sat on the side of the broad four-poster bed

upon which his wife lay and while he stroked her smooth hands and she smiled gently up at him and wore the invisible lovely halo of nearing motherhood, he told her of the splendid big news from Frankfort and of O'Shea's plans and, more at length, of his own newly spawned schemes; and to these last she gave her approval just as all through their life together she did give her approval to whatsoever he might design.

By virtue of his potations his breath was heavy, but otherwise and possibly excusing a tremendous exuberance, there was nothing about him to suggest that he had consumed a considerable quantity of high-proof alcohol. Besides, he had every reason for feeling uplifted in spirit.

By the lamplight there he talked until bedtime, reviewing his project, repeating details, elaborating on them, and she saying little, as was her way, but pledging assent with her tranquil look and with pressure of her slender fingers. They were lovers, these two—had been lovers from boyhood and girlhood; would continue through their life together always to be lovers even though about once in so often the husband slipped away to Lexington or to Louisville for a fling of infidelity.

His visions took on shape and expanded, feeding upon his swiftly kindled enthusiasms. He canvassed various titles, then at length hit on a title for the brand he meant to manufacture. By gad, it would be the Old Blockhouse Brand! She concurred in that.

"With luck and by bestirring myself, I ought to be the first, or almost the first in the field hereabouts," he went on. He smote his knee violently. "Not I, but we! My boy and I! Bird & Son—that shall be the firm. The great day you give him to me, sweetheart, that day he becomes the junior partner. For of course he's going to be a boy!"

At that she pursed up her lips to be kissed and he, seeing the rush of tears in her unafraid confident eyes, cried just a little bit himself while he bent down and enfolded her in his arms and fondled her until the cheeks of either were moistened from the happy weeping of the other.

In his predictions, the colonel, so it would turn out, had been both right and wrong. The child was a male child and came into the world comely and well-formed; but Bird & Son were not the first in the field although afterwards rated as among the pioneers there. For other far-looking men in this region already had been plotting as was now this ambitious young man, had been preparing the groundwork for what before so very long would become one of the state's celebrated industries—perhaps its most celebrated industry, and certainly one of its most respected and respectable industries—an industry invested with a sort of burning fame and with a glamor of romance, an aura of luxury, a fetish of poetry, or, anyway, a sort of poetry.

★ VIII ★

A BOY OF THE BLUE GRASS

YOU lived in the country. Though your father might be a banker or a lawyer or a merchandiser he had —if he followed the common custom—a place out in the country and farmed it, growing grain or the yellow Burley tobacco or hemp or hay or sheep or horseflesh; and he rode into town of a morning, rode back out at nightfall.

Unless he were very old or very infirm, he generally rode a smart saddle-horse to and fro so that, what with so many traveling this way, the gritty turnpikes forever were clinking and the old covered wooden bridges forever drumming to the strokes of all those nimble hoofs. Wheeled vehicles, excepting sulkies—buggies and surreys and what-not—they were for women and girls.

You yourself had your own pony and, when you were old enough for such, would have a horse like your father's; a plantation horse, so called, a fox-trotter or a single-footer, with a gait so smooth that riding him would be almost like sitting in a rocking-chair. But he must also be able to cover ground a plenty when called

upon for speed. Racking along was all right when you were in no particular rush about it. But just going some place was one thing and getting there in a big hurry was another.

Then again, if your father followed distilling for a business, it rarely happened that his distillery was in town. It might be in the town's sleepy slattern outskirts, but was more likely to be a few miles on out into the country, standing perhaps on the banks of a shale-bedded, clear-running creek, but surely set close by a spring giving forth the soft pure sweet limestone water. Without the right sort of spring-water—the kind that came up out of the genuine bird's-eye limestone—you couldn't make the right sort of whisky. "The Rule of the Regions" was what Colonel Taylor, down on Glen's Creek, had called it in a pamphlet which grown people were forever quoting in your hearing.

It was that same limestone and that same water which produced the blue grass, and it was the combination of all three which authentically produced the horses with the stoutest bones and the slimmest, fastest legs and the most satiny coats in the world; produced likewise the prettiest women that ever were and the tallest, strongest men. Everybody who knew anything at all about anything at all said that. It wasn't a thing to be argued about; it was a thing to be stated, just flat-out.

So generally from the distillery windows there were tilled meadows and gardens and woodsy small hills and

walnut groves to look out on, instead of tobacco warehouses and stemmeries and dirty sheds and rows of slovenly houses. Howsomever, even if the plant had been in town, there wouldn't have been many smoky workshops about, because this was not a manufacturing country but a pastoral country.

If your father's distillery stood right on your own home place, as was the case in at least one instance, that was best of all because handy-by you had a series of noble big playhouses all full of fascinating smells and fascinating nooks and corners. You couldn't beat it for games like "hi-spy." Having a distiller for a father was better even than having a race-horse breeder for a father, although there was something to be said in favor of the huge hay-crammed barns and the exercise paddocks and the pastures where the brood-mares grazed and the yearlings cavorted, and much to be said for the interesting company of the darky stable-hands.

But this much was certain: Distilling and raising thoroughbreds were the picks of all businesses for a father to be in. Ordinary people looked up to him then and called him a real Kentucky gentleman, and that, as you frequently were reminded, was just a little bit the finest title anybody on this earth ever could hope to wear.

You rode your pony to school, racing other boys on their ponies past the white-painted fences fronting the homesteads and past the low rock walls of the cultivated lands. The school you went to was a private

school and taught by a lady of the vicinity in reduced circumstances—the lady, that is, although the vicinity from which she came might be in reduced circumstances, too.

Later on, making ready for college, you would be sent to a larger school which usually was presided over by a somewhat faded and subdued gentleman or else by an over-florid gentleman with a martial air about him and a military record behind him—a Colonel Somebody, perhaps, or a Major Somebody Else. There were free schools also—a few spoke of them as public schools or as district schools—but these were not for the likes of you.

Free schools were an invention of the Devil or the Yankees, which amounted practically to the same thing, and most of their teachers were imported Yankees, who were let alone by the best people and frequently had trouble finding places to board. Free schools were not patronized by the first families. They were for the "scrubs"—the "tacky" people. There was beginning to be talk of free schools for the darkies. You'd heard your father say that was what they really were fit for —darkies and Yankees.

At school you met only children of your own station in life but at home you consorted by preference with the negro boys who lived on your father's place or near it. Negro boys made ideal companions, being more resourceful than you at devising entertainment, and more daring at executing plans for mischief.

Oftener than not, a negro boy was the leader in your juvenile enterprises. Up to a certain age he excelled in the qualities of leadership. But after that age it seemed that he, mentally, began to slow up, whereas you kept on and passed him and went ahead.

But until you were about twelve years old, say, or maybe thirteen, you ranged as a member of a motley white-and-black predatory band, the black contingent predominating both in numbers and in audacity. In such magpied company you played town ball and rounders and Ant'ny-over, which were ball games; played also Bombay and marbles and sow-in-the-mushpot, which last sport was fraught with hazard for bare shins; and in that same piebald alliance you "went in" swimming and you robbed birds' nests and picked berries and nuts and papaws, and stole out of some neighbor's patch the fat melons and pilfered from neighbors' orchards the insipid yellow May apples, which perversely belied their name by ripening in June.

There were plenty of watermelons to be had at home and an abundance of apples, but they tasted better if procured through brigandage and eaten by stealth. Naturally, you owned the single-barreled muzzle-loader with which rabbits and squirrels were hunted, and field-larks and yellowhammers and doves slain, and robins murdered for robin potpie, but nine times out of ten some negro boy of your intimate acquaintance was a better shot with this firearm than were you, its proud proprietor. Undeniably he was quicker at spying out

the game. And if there was a hound-dog to be mastered and trained, or a treed possum to be captured alive, those same competent dark hands took over that task.

On Sundays you put on stiff and starchy garments —for instance, a white linen blouse with an enormous frilly-edged collar and gigantic cuffs to match—and shoes and stockings; and you went (by carriage now and not on pony-back) to Sunday-school and church. If the grown-ups of your family were Episcopalians or Presbyterians or if they were Roman Catholics—as was the case with a very few families such as the O'Sheas and the Moons and the Mouquins—church meant a trip into town; but if they were Baptists or Campbellites or Methodists, they probably attended at a roadside church set on a knoll in a walnut grove out here in the country.

That morning when the family equipage got to the toll-gate, the toll-gate man came out of his little house and if by any chance you were strangers to him, he asked first whether you-all were on your way for worship at such-and-such a church and the answer being yes, he next asked this one: "Do you fellership regular with that denomernation?" And again the answer being yes, he levered up the long pole that stretched thwartwise of the road and for this once let you go through without your paying anything. But of course when members of your own family drove up, the toll-keeper lifted his bar with no delay or parley whatsoever

but instead with a handsome flourish, because neither on Sundays nor on week-days did any of you have to pay, your father being a stockholder in the company that owned the pike and kept it up.

The lower classes resented this favoritism since, except when churchgoing, they must pay toll. You heard of them holding meetings of protest and passing resolutions calling for free roads. But naturally people who believed in free schools would be the sort to want free roads.

All about a country church, single horses and teams harnessed to buggies and phaetons and carryalls and even to democrat wagons and buckboards and spring-wagons would be fastened to trees or hitch-racks; and in pleasant weather the sounds of whinnyings and stampings and threshings of tails against the flies, and the agonized creakings of wheels suddenly cramped, would come in through the open windows and maybe would bother the minister at his preaching. Generally you could tell a Campbellite church or a Baptist church from a Methodist church by the number of rigs outside during services—there would be more of them.

There was no other part of the state, so you had heard it said, where Campbellites were so thick as they were here in the Blue Grass. They were beginning, though, to speak of themselves as Disciples of Christ or as Christians rather than by their original name, and here and there you ran across a Campbellite boy who would fight you if you called him that.

From church you rode home for Sunday dinner, which was a most lavish and a monstrous meal and a thing of pomp and circumstance. But then, dinner every day was lavish. In the peak of summer, while the last of the early garden-truck still hung on and the first of the late truck was ready for picking, you had seen as many as ten separate vegetables spread before you at once—that is to say, cooked fresh vegetables and not counting the cole-slaw, and the mixed sliced raw tomatoes and cucumbers, and the lettuce drenched in vinegar and sweetened with sugar, or the pickled things and the jammed things and the preserved things which, being standbys, weren't supposed to count anyway.

Likewise at every meal, regardless of what else might be offered, a cold boiled ham and a jug of molasses appeared, one at the head of the table, the other at its foot, like altar objects for a species of devotion. Breakfast, too, was a heavy and ritualistic affair with at least two kinds of hot bread; and supper was only slightly less so. But on Sunday night there was a cold supper instead of a hot one.

By another thing Sunday was distinguished. After dinner was over, the mistress of the house sent by darky girls to the neighboring housekeepers samples of her most special dainty—usually a taste of the dessert; and these ladies promptly repaid in kind by sending their servants over with lemon sherbet or *brûlé* ice-cream or perhaps a bait of berries under a snowy napkin or a plate piled high with slices of rich cake.

From countless tellings you knew by heart the tale of that singular household of aliens from somewhere or other away far off, who bought the old Hoke place just down the road a little piece, and on the evening of the day they moved in, your grandmother dispatched her chief of staff across lots with a great platter of hot beaten biscuit, all split and buttered, and her best company coffee-pot, the silver one with the ivory handle, full of freshly brewed coffee, and a tall pitcher of sweet milk, and another tall pitcher of buttermilk and a dumpy pitcher of thick cream.

"Those people haven't had time to get settled yet," your grandmother had said, "and probably they'll be eating a pick-up snack, and I imagine something hot will be welcomed."

The big moment was when Mom Aggie came back, still bearing her original burden under its snowy napery.

"Ole Miss," she stated venomously, "you know whut 'at w'ite woman say to me?"

"You mean that white lady, don't you, Aggie?" reproved your grandmother.

"Have it yore own way, only she ain't act lak no w'ite quality ever act to me befo' dis. I knocks at her kitchen do' an' she come to de do' herse'f, wid her haid tied up in a towel or a dish-rag. Well, da's all right, she jes' gittin' her house fixed an' all; but w'en I say to her, heah's a few mossils of vittles 'at you send down fur they supper, hopin' dey mout lak 'em, she up an'

'low right back to me, sharp-lak, ez how dey got plenty to eat an' ain't wishin' to buy nothin' frum no strangers; an' w'en dey does crave to buy somethin' she'll let you know. B'lieve it or not, Ole Miss, 'at whut she say! *Buy,* mind you!" Mom Aggie's voice soared in a derisive cackle. *"Buyin'* frum *us!"* The outraged emissary fairly shrieked it.

"But didn't you explain? didn't you—"

"Who—me? *Huh!* Whut's de use tryin' 'splain to somebody ez ign'unt ez whut dat—dat pusson must be? Nome, I jes' taken my foot in my hand an' come on back home straight ez ever I could git heah!"

"Perhaps you're right, Aggie. That sort of people wouldn't understand. And I must say I'm afraid I'll never be able to understand them, either."

To the end of their chapter the newcomers remained foreigners, outsiders, lookers-on and lookers-in. You learned—you were taught, in fact—to look upon them as being somehow subtly different from the rest of the people roundabout. Because whenever they were spoken of, the incredible incident of Mom Aggie's mission was sure to be recited also. It became, in time, folklore—a thing in itself inconceivable but vouched for on unimpeachable authority.

Yes, indeed, you certainly did belong to a caste that set great store by things to eat. You heard of a lady over in Shelby County who held, and most jealously guarded, the secret for pohickory—that delectable dish which the Indians of Virginia back in the Jamestown

days fashioned out of corn-meal mixed with the ground-up kernels and the rich buttery oils of scaly-bark nuts—a secret reputed to be hers and hers only of all the peoples now alive on this planet. Her fame was more than parochial.

Scarcely less notable was another lady whose specialty was making the most delicious cushaw-bread—which really was more like a batter pudding than a bread loaf—by a private recipe which she guarded as the apple of her eye. You heard of cooks who bragged that their w'ite folks th'owed away mo' good vittles than some folks had to eat.

You knew of homes where always at the table of the "big dine-room," as also at the servants' table in the kitchen, at least one extra cover was set for each meal against the contingency of an unexpected guest—white or black, as might be—dropping in. Indeed, your home was one of these homes.

Tramps passing through these favored parts got greasy and sassy and almost too fat to keep on with their tramping. The idea that any living creature, without regard to race or color, should go hungry through lack of funds with which to buy provender was foreign to the imaginations of the community.

Excepting at the hotel, food was to be given away, not to be sold. You might be frugal with your dollars but to hoard food was stinginess and stinginess was contemptible; it was "common," which was even worse. Let a gentleman—almost any gentleman from almost

anywhere—be quartered at the hotel and some local gentleman presently would be calling to introduce himself and to proffer the hospitalities of his home.

Let a worthy poorish family move into the district and at once a wealthier resident would be sending over —with his compliments—a spare milch cow or a sow or a sack of meal from his storeroom, a side of meat from his smoke-house. About the very act and routine of living there was a kind of feudalistic prodigality, a medieval liberality and carefreeness.

So naturally, it came to pass that much of the talk you heard had to do with food—and with drink. But more of it, a great deal more of it among male adults, had to do with politics and with speechmaking—with campaigns for office, which seemed to overlap one another, so fast they followed, and with the oratory uttered and the strategy carried on, and the street-duels fought out in pursuance thereof; and some of the talk had to do with the making of Bourbon and the breeding of thoroughbreds and the planting of Burley, these three being honored callings which in the minds and the conversations of most of your elders appeared to march together at the very forefront of human industries.

Trips away from home fell into spaced and regulated grooves. They occurred as parts of an ordained and seasonal plan rather than because of sporadic restlessness or sudden impulse. In the spring the seniors went to Louisville for the running of the Derby, a classic newly established then; and in October to Lex-

ington for the Trots. To the county fair, the same being an annual autumnal event, all hands went.

Then in the dead of the withering long summer, the household packed up and journeyed overland either to "Old White" or to "Old Crab Orchard," traveling—before the railroads were put through—in a regular caravan with the servants trailing behind, and stopping en route for meals and lodgings with relatives or with friends of the family, but generally with relatives, of whom miraculously there seemed to be a brood at nearly every convenient stopping-over point. In fact, you "cousined" so many people that you lost count. But you had a grandmother or an aunt—everybody, it would appear, had such a grandmother or such an aunt—whose main purpose in life was to trace out and keep blooming the ramifications of the family tree to the outermost branches.

After the railroads got linked up, the trip was made more expeditiously but with infinitely less of pleasurable excitement on the way, aboard the steamcars. Some of the leading families preferred White Sulphur and some leaned to Crab Orchard Springs.

In after years, looking back on those younger days, it was marvelous to think how constantly the qualifying adjective "old" had entered into the scheme of your juvenile existence. It was the word, so you figured, that you heard oftenest of any, for so many things were spoken of as being old, whether they really had any great antiquity or not—"Old" Centre and "Old"

Transvania here in your own state; "Old" V. M. I. and the "Old" University of Virginia; "Old" Woodford County and "Old" Jefferson and "Old" Nelson; "Old" Rockcastle and Indian "Old" Fields; "old" hams, meaning by that hams put by for not less than two years in the curing and generally not more than three years spent therein; and, of course, "old" whisky.

Every brand you heard of was the "Old" This or the "Old" That brand. A traditional reverence for what was aged or what passed for being aged or was so labeled, came literally to be a part of you. Likewise and inevitably, whenever men grew eloquent or women grew poetic, Kentucky was "Old Kentucky," the words being spoken with a lingering and a tremendously affectionate cadence; and Kentucky, as your motherland, as the first-born of the Old Dominion, you were supposed to venerate and to love the most of all.

You understand, it was this way: You were taught, not necessarily as a subject for boasting, but as an article of your private faith, that Kentuckians were the best and the smartest and the bravest people in this world; that Kentucky was the finest state in the Union and that the Blue Grass was the finest part of this finest state, it being God's Country, His Garden Spot, and one generously favored by Him above all the rest of creation; finally, that your particular nook and corner of the Blue Grass was the finest nook and corner in all the Blue Grass.

Woodford might call herself the "Asparagus Bed,"

and did; Owen, just over yonder, might be "Sweet Owen" to all her loyal sons and daughters—and all of them, you bet you, were loyal; Harrison or Mercer or Jessamine might proudly vaunt herself of this or that, but when all was said and done—and much was said—your county was the grandest, richest, loveliest, dearest county of them all, its men the gamest, its women the most beautiful and the most virtuous. It just naturally had to be, because, you see, it was your county.

If, out of this training, you got plenty of vanity and mighty little of humility, whose fault was it? Not altogether yours, surely. So perhaps a certain Isham Bird III, growing out of childhood into boyhood and up out of boyhood into youth amid these surroundings and under these influences, was not entirely to be blamed for developing into what, in his adolescence, he did develop into.

✱ IX ✱

A CHARACTER SKETCH

IT WOULD seem that this same young Isham must have been a throwback to some remote progenitor. Physically he grew up to be not in the least like his father, seeing that the father, who ran close and true to his breeding, was inclined to ranginess and an angularity of frame, whereas the son had no corners to his contours but from infancy onward was cased in a rounded, soft-appearing mold. Nor had he inherited his father's loves of story-telling and crowds and robustious fellowships. The father had sentiment, the son had temperament; you might put it that way and not be very far wrong.

In his bodily aspect the youngster slightly suggested his mother; there the resemblance ended. For she was a Grover, every inch of her, and the Grovers had the name of being a resolute, firm-fibered stock; and, for all her outward shyness and reserve, her almost shrinking air in company, the colonel's wife really was scared of nothing on this earth excepting mice and spiders and the possibility of some day or somehow being betrayed into a word or an action which by her code

might be deemed "unladylike." Not that she ever was so betrayed; still she had within her demure, aloof self the faint but constant fear of it.

But this son of theirs now: he was a curious compound of contrary and contrasting elements. By turns, he might be diffident or he might be arrogant; he might be sullen or sunny, as the mood took him; a great timorousness and a wayward audacity were mixed up in him; and sometimes one would be in the ascendency and sometimes another, and neither he nor those who knew him ever could be sure of him.

He would back a half-broken stallion and put the lunging beast at the tallest stone fence in the county, but until he was past sixteen he hated to go alone into a dark room. Stories of "Ol' Raw-haid an' Bloody-bones" which his negro nurse had planted in him when he was a child stayed in his mind and gave him a tingling in the calves of his legs, a crinkling sensation at the nape of his neck and down his spine. As a boy, he was powerful in argument but rather reluctant to use his fists. The fact was, he did not so much dread the pain of stout blows as he dreaded the thought of being defeated.

These conflicting impulses made him brisk and overbearing at the quarreling but an indifferent performer at the fighting. As a born egotist, and one suitably fattened from the cradle up on a fine and nourishing pap for egotism, he didn't exactly turn tail and run away, but should the issue sharpen to the point of boyish hos-

tilities, he was prone to give ground. He might bully boys younger than he was; he walked wide though of boys of an established reputation for truculence.

In young Isham's case, the colonel's tendency toward occasional displays of an innocent and rather likable bombast was translated into a haughtiness and frequently an open rudeness toward those he regarded as his inferiors. There were a good many that he so regarded.

Even in his most exalted moments, the father's sense of humor kept him from being actually pompous and saved him from strutting a false dignity, but in the boy's make-up was no such redeeming philosophy. He rarely laughed with you; he preferred to laugh at you and your discomfitures. As he approached his majority, there came to be a neighborhood saying that he didn't know how to handle the negroes, which singled him out as an oddity of the species, since an inherent ability in that direction was well-nigh universal among his sort.

The trouble with him was that in his treatment of the black folks he overdid the benignantly tyrannical rôle and underdid the paternalistic pose; factors which, by an instinct, most of his fellows could balance in just the proper proportions. Differently circumstanced, he might have made a first-rate despot; he never would have made a competent administrator of affairs.

At seventeen he went to the University of Virginia, his father casting the deciding vote for Virginia as

against Princeton where a good many young Southerners of that generation were sent. On his vacations he came home, each time showing more and more of intolerance for the opinions of his elders, more and more of an imperious and scornful superiority toward youngsters of his own age who belonged to any set other than the set to which he belonged.

He was, on the surface, so very cock-sure that mighty few ever suspected that often, deep down in him, an infirmity of temperament made him uncertain of himself even when he behaved with the most assurance. "Bigotty" and "toploftical" were the words of local vernacular commonly employed behind his back for describing him.

In his third year he quit college, giving as a reason that he wanted to get into the business. The truth was that the discipline irked him. Also he had never been especially popular among his classmates. But that part of it he kept to himself. To hear him tell it, he had stood at the top of everything.

He didn't get into the business, though; at least not to the extent which his father inwardly wished for. He presently made himself one—or tried to—of a group of pistol-toting, card-playing, excitement-loving young fellows who caroused a good deal and ranged from county to county seeking entertainment and sweethearts.

As a squire of dames, this mercurial youngster notably was successful. Men might not be especially drawn

to him, but for women—or rather girls—he had decidedly a captivating way about him. Girls seemed to like his domineering and cavalierly attitudes; they seemed to like his affectations and his instabilities and his very selfishness, whereas by these traits and by various of his mannerisms he frequently affronted the young blades and the young bravos with whom mainly he associated.

Nearly everywhere he went he made conquests among the girls, and that heightened and broadened his native vanity. Win 'em, then flout 'em—that was his customary method of campaign; and it proved for him good and agreeable strategy.

At twenty-three he was a steady drinker of raw whisky. He was not much of a hand for drinking with a roistering crowd, "for sociability," as the phrase had it, but a great hand for priming himself with liquor before embarking on some private exploit or some private expedition. Drink sharpened in young Isham the amative forces, made a hot strong oil for the lamp of his passions.

Strangely enough, it did not give him the lust after indiscretions in other quarters. He rarely grew pot-valiant in masculine company, rarely indulged in purely masculine escapades. Such courage for daredeviling as he had after plying himself with the biting red stuff was altogether another nature of courage.

His mother saw in him only perfections. She had spoiled him in his babyhood and in his childhood and

his boyhood; she continued in his youth to spoil him. Always she was ready to make allowances for his obvious shortcomings—only she never recognized, or at least never admitted to outsiders, that they were shortcomings.

For him she fabricated excuses which to her at least were valid; she stood on guard for him against punishments or denials. Upon him she squandered the tremendous lavishness of an unreasoning and boundless capacity for affection.

He was the one child she had borne, so he got, undivided, the love she might have bestowed upon a whole brood. After his birth the doctors had said she must have no more children; indeed, from the time of his birth until her death, she remained a semi-invalid, an uncomplaining and patient semi-invalid, with a dauntless spirit which seemed infinitely too big for the frail body wherein it was housed.

* X *

MRS. RINGO AIRS HER VIEWS

AS A PARENT, the colonel likewise had the fault of being overly indulgent. He had no such blind idolatry as his wife had for their son, but he did develop a faculty for blinking at that which in another man's son he might have looked upon as reprehensible or unworthy. If secretly he felt distress over young Isham's bumptious view-points or young Isham's ruthlessness of conduct, he nevertheless was ready to come to the boy's defense were there criticism out of any quarter.

"I'm just standing by and letting the youngster play his string out his own way," he said. "Let him kick up his heels among the fillies—all spirited colts do that. Let him sow a few wild oats hither and yon while the sowing's good and his blood runs fast. I sowed quite a chance of 'em myself, in my time. Better that he should take the jumps at twenty-odd than at forty-odd. He'll be all the wiser and saner for it when he does settle down."

He said this to his widowed sister, middle-aged and solid-looking Mrs. Juanita Ringo, from over at Dan-

ville, upon the occasion of one of her infrequent visits. That rather austere-minded lady did not come to Bird's Nest often and when she did come there usually was a purpose behind her coming.

It was she who brought up the subject of young Isham's alleged delinquencies, presently relating it to the subject which always was uppermost in her mind. It would seem that no matter what the subject might be, she sooner or later could apply to it a more or less extended interpolation with reference to her favorite topic—to wit: total and compulsory abstinence, as a cure-all, moral and social and physical, for the evils of the race and the world at large.

In that respect, she had a beautiful flexibility; otherwise you would call her inflexible. A good many people went further than that; they called her a fanatic. Being charitable about it, you might say here was a woman with a mission in life and like most women who have missions in life she was a woman of one dominant idea.

She listened in silence while her brother said this, but her eye was alight and her nostril, like that of the Scriptural war-horse, sniffed the battle afar off. So the colonel, pausing for a reply and getting none, coughed to hide a small embarrassment and, somewhat lamely, repeated the concluding sentence of his rejoinder to what, in effect, had been her opening gun:

"Yes suhree, I'm certain he'll be all the wiser for it when he does settle down."

Now, figuratively girding up her loins, she made an-

swer: "What guarantee have you that he ever will settle down?"

"Because he will; it stands to reason he will. Pretty soon he'll be falling heels over head in love with some pretty girl. Lord knows he runs after them fast enough." He chuckled rather pridefully over this thought of his son's prowess as a courtier. "Well, some of these days he'll overtake one of 'em—he'll meet up with the pick of the flock, I hope. And we'll all be going to a big wedding, and then I'll have a sweet young daughter-in-law to brighten up this old place—it does get kind of lonesome sometimes, what with Sally laid up sick so much of the time and the boy off gallivanting around the country—and then he'll settle down and make a good husband and a prominent citizen. Oh, you'll see."

"I hope so—for your sake, Attila, and for poor dear Sally's. I hope I may live to see it. But in the meantime I'm seeing things with my own eyes and I'm hearing things—"

"Oh, old women's gossip!"

"Not at all. I don't want to wound you unnecessarily but in plain justice to you—after all, you are my brother and Isham is my nephew and I feel that I have a right to speak and I've never yet hesitated to speak my mind where I felt it my Christian duty to speak out, much less in a case like this where I have the closest of blood ties—"

"Never mind about your Christian duty, Juanita.

Don't forget that I have my own Christian duties to perform and try to perform them." The colonel, who was a vestryman at St. George's in town, spoke a bit stiffly. "If you have anything to say against the boy—any direct accusation, I mean, not mere idle malicious rumor—I suggest that you quit beating about the bush and come to the point and say it."

"I have no specific charges to bring against anyone. But the talk you hear everywhere about the way that wild dissipated crowd he runs with are cutting up all over the country—that's what I mean. And the habits they're forming—drinking! Oh, this curse of drink!"

"Aha!" exclaimed the colonel. "I thought that eventually would be it. May I remind you that this family has done pretty well by this curse, as you prefer to call it?"

"You, to sit there and say that! Didn't one of the first of our line to settle in Kentucky—Shadwell Bird, our own great-great-uncle—didn't he, as an old man, die a shameful death from liquor—stabbed to death during a drunken brawl in some low brothel?"

"You're going pretty far back into history to get a moral to adorn your tale, aren't you, sis? Besides, if the facts as handed down are correct, it wasn't the likker that killed the aged party you speak of so feelingly. It was the fellow who stuck him with a dirk knife—and not such bad riddance, either, by all accounts." The colonel laughed, a trifle theatrically, over his retort. He was striving not to lose his temper.

"I don't need to go so far back for examples. There was our own dear weak lovable father. Have you forgotten—"

"Suppose we respect the memory of the dead and stick to the living." His tone, as he interrupted to cut her short, was tart.

"It was you who brought the family into this discussion, not I, Attila. Very well then, I will confine myself to the living and to living issues. . . . Attila Bird, aren't you afraid a judgment will be laid upon you for putting temptation before your own flesh and blood?"

"Meaning by that, I assume, Isham?"

"Naturally."

"I'd like for you to tell me how I'm going to help myself—even conceding that I wanted to—what with a distillery running full blast within three hundred yards of where you're sitting—a distillery, moreover, in which he's the junior partner, and taking his profits out of it. Why, when the windows are open and the wind's in the right quarter, the smell from the mash-tubs fills this room and this whole house, as you're very well aware.

"You don't honor us with your presence often but you're here enough to know that. And a mighty appetizing smell, too, if you're asking me." He grew explosive. "Temptation be—be jiggered!

"Listen here to me, sis: I've taken notice—it's been my experience—that you can make temptation a blamed sight more alluring to young folks when you try to

hide it away from them—try to made it a mysterious and forbidden thing—than when you don't. As far back as that boy's memory goes, he's seen whisky on that sideboard in yonder and on this center table, in here. From his earliest childhood he's seen me drinking my own product and glad to get it, knowing it to be pure and good; he's seen all my men friends drinking it.

"Almost from his infancy, he's had it drummed into him that when he reached the proper age the whisky was there for him if he wanted it and that if he used it in moderation and under suitable circumstances, as a gentleman should, it would be a joy and a pleasure to him, but that if he drank too much—if he abused the gift, abused the privilege of drinking—he'd suffer for it just as he would if he abused any other gift of our Bountiful Creator to the children of men. He's been taught that a gentleman should master his appetites, not let his appetites master him."

"Suppose your gentleman or anybody else, for that matter, isn't able to master his own appetites. I say then it's the duty of the strong to practice self-denial themselves in order to protect those who aren't as strong as they are. I pray for such a spiritual awakening among the people, as it already has come to a few."

"Your prayers are going to waste, then, sis. If you'll excuse me for saying it, that's bosh you're spouting—just so much pure bosh. I don't know how you temperance advocates—you Prohibitionists, as you're be-

ginning to call yourselves—ever get such fantastical notions in your heads.

"Why, you can't protect the weakling from himself—not by law or by precept or example or by preaching or any way. I grant you, likker apparently destroys a certain proportion of the population; anyhow, I'll admit bad likker does. But if these unfortunates couldn't get whisky—if, that is, you can conceive of such a preposterous condition in a free land—they'd be destroying themselves with something else, something worse. It's in accordance with Nature's plan for weeding out the unfit and making more room for the worth while.

"It comes down to this: if a fellow wants to go to hell in a hand-basket he'll find another hand-basket somewhere if you take his old one away from him. . . . But say, look here, we're getting off the main track, thanks to your curious digressions." The colonel, who felt that he was having the better of this debate, was in good humor again. "We started to thresh out a specific matter and here we are dealing with glittering generalities and abstract propositions.

"Of course, knowing the stuff that's in my son—and your nephew—I know you wouldn't even couple him in your mind with weakness or weaklings. I wouldn't do you or him either the injustice of suggesting such a thing. Still, we did have him up for discussion, didn't we? And, let's see, just where was I? . . .

"Oh yes, I was speaking of the training he'd had! He's been taught that under no conditions does a gentle-

man go into the presence of ladies with even the smell of likker on his breath, let alone doing so when under the influence of it. He's been taught that there are times to drink and times to leave it alone. I've taught him those things myself. And now you come talking to me about temptation!

"Suppose, though, for the sake of the argument, I didn't make whisky or that I suddenly decided to quit making it. Suppose that to gratify your whims—let's put it that way if it doesn't hurt your feelings—suppose I shut up shop tomorrow. Probably I'd go broke if I tried making a living at any other trade, but never mind that trivial little detail.

"Just let us assume that I up and quit this business that I've been in and done pretty tolerably well at, for upwards of twenty-five long years. What difference would that make so far as Isham was concerned? Wouldn't he still be able to find Bourbon flowing free and abundant practically everywhere else he went?"

"Those vile wicked shameful rum-holes!" interrupted Mrs. Ringo. "Oh, if there was only some power to sweep them off the face of the earth!"

"If 'rum-holes' is your pet name for saloons, I'm with you there—in a way of speaking. I reckon I'm as much opposed to a certain type of saloon that's springing up as anybody else could be, almost. To some people that statement might sound strange, coming from me, but it's the truth, sis, and you know it, having heard my views along this line before now.

"The old-time taverns that we used to have and the decently run bars that we have plenty of today—they aren't to be mentioned in the same breath with these cheap rough corner-groggeries. I wish there was some rational way to get rid of them. They give the whole industry a black eye.

"It might interest you to know that only here last week I sent in word to this fellow Tom Handysides that I'd sell him no more of my goods at any price. I don't like the sort of place he runs—dealing out likker over his bar to minors, yes, to half-grown boys, and, in violation of the ordinance, actually selling it to women in his back rooms. Naturally—*ahem*—it's only a certain class of women here in this country that drink publicly or even in private except for medicinal purposes and it's only that class that ever will drink openly. Still, he caters to a few of those poor depraved creatures, as I hear on reliable authority."

"You pass laws to deprive young boys from having it! And laws to keep women—even such women as you have hinted at—from entering the places where it is sold! Aren't boys—and women—human beings? If whisky is a bad thing for one group, why isn't it a bad thing for all groups? Or is it that you men, who won't let us vote, won't let us have a hand in politics, admit by the very legislation you pass that you propose to indulge yourselves in a thing which is dangerous for young people and for women?"

"My dear child," said the colonel majestically—

she was three years older than he but his air was paternal and pitying—"my dear child, you merely confuse the issue, merely cloud it by these interjections of yours. What sane woman wants to vote?"

"I've heard of some. So have you."

"Not in the South, thank heaven! No true southern-born lady would ever descend so far as to sully her hands by dabbling in politics, and I'm proud of 'em for it. . . . Well, anyhow, I've closed out this Tom Handysides' account. Let him buy his stock somewhere else. He'll not get another drop from us. . . .

"But the point I was trying to make just now before we got to wandering off the main route is that my son wouldn't have to frequent barrooms in order to get his likker if he couldn't get it here. He'd find it openly displayed and available at the home of nearly every well-born family in our entire circle of acquaintances. If he cared to take a drink or a number of drinks, he'd be welcome to it. If, for any reason, he chose to abstain altogether that would be his business and no other gentleman would question his right to do so.

"By that same token, neither to him nor to his host nor to the two of them would it ever occur that they had the authority to seek to interfere by deed or by word of mouth with any other gentleman's rights in these premises. That would not only be meddling; it would be what is infinitely worse—it would be bad manners, a sign of deficient breeding. Now you know these things, Juanita, as well as I do."

"I do, and it fills me with sorrow and with concern—yes, it fills me with the deepest alarm. That's just it, Attila, the trail of this terrible traffic goes everywhere and laps over everything. But a day of reckoning is coming. You may not live to see it, I may not live to see it, but the day is coming when this nation will arise in its might to banish this evil thing, to prohibit it absolutely and forever, to wipe it out root and branch."

"You're right in one respect but you don't go far enough. You're right when you say that we won't live to see that day—and nobody who comes after us will live to see that day, either. It'll never come so long as the white race in this country, and every other country that the white race runs, remains the same race it has been since the beginning of time.

"Oh, of course from time to time there'll be little futile waves, little spasms—there's a spasm on now, and you appear to be one of its worst victims, although you've had the disease from your girlhood. But the record of civilization is full of such isolated and sporadic and meaningless little upheavals; they're only temporary; they don't amount to anything."

"Doesn't what Maine did long years ago mean anything to you? Nor what Kansas has done? Nor what other states are plainly preparing to do? Oh, there are signs."

"Not to me they don't mean anything. Maine's too far away and too full of blue-nose down-east Yankees for me to be able to understand the vagaries of such

people as they must be up there. And what could you expect of a jayhawker-ridden state like Kansas that doesn't seem to produce anything except sunflowers and grasshoppers and cranks? Mind you, though, I'm not speaking of what a freak state here and there does, or what an isolated county may do. There you've got the principle of local self-government involved. And I fought for four long years in defense of States' Rights, my dear sister. But you were hinting at a national law, and that's a different thing.

"There'll never be so mad and so nonsensical a thing as sumptuary legislation enacted by Congress to cover the whole country—why, it's preposterous to talk about it. And if by the wildest flight of fancy you could imagine such an impossible thing coming to pass, you couldn't make that law enforceable and binding on the people at large. And as for Kentucky concurring in such foolishness—well, honestly I have to laugh. Wait a minute, though: do you want me to tell you how you could make such a fool law effective even here in Kentucky?"

"If you choose."

"I do choose. You could make it effective by repealing at the same time two other laws that have been in effect since quite a while back. One's the universal law of human nature and the other's the chemical law of natural fermentation."

"It pleases you to jest," answered Mrs. Ringo, "—to jest about what is no jesting matter. I tell you the con-

science of this land is slowly but surely being aroused. Some day—years away perhaps, generations away perhaps—it will be thoroughly aroused, thoroughly awake and up in arms against the blight of strong drink."

"Who wants a weak drink?"

"Let me finish please. Already some of the ministers right here in the heart of the whisky-making country are taking a stand openly and aboveboard against what you represent, Attila."

"What I represent, eh? Honestly, Juanita, if I were thin-skinned and were not your brother and didn't have my share of natural affection for you, I'd probably break loose and say things to you I shouldn't say. What I represent is what the leading men of this region—bearers of the oldest names among us, honored names, famous names, some of them—likewise represent."

He called off a tally of them: Ripy, Gaines, Bond, Lillard, Pepper, McBrayer, Harper, McCullogh, Chinn, Swigert, Taylor, Bonnie, Thomas, Tyler, Thompson—a dozen more. He called them off boomingly and triumphantly, with the air of one firing battery after battery of invincible artillery.

But this adversary was proof against such heavy ordnance. As each name was blared forth, she merely sniffed through a nose which was elevated well in air; and at the last name of all, which was Bird, she sniffed the loudest and most scornful sniff of all.

With difficulty the colonel resisted a strong impulse

to storm at her. By these new tactics of hers he was being aggravated almost beyond his powers of self-control. But he kept his voice down, and though it cost him an almost visible effort, he kept his face composed and amiable as he went on:

"Who are these few pet preachers of yours that have the audacity to stand up in their pulpits and berate such men as these I've been naming? I'll tell you who they are: bigoted fence-corner Baptists, shirt-tail Methodists, here and there a backwoods Campbellite. But you don't find the conservative clergymen—the responsible pastors of the old communions—cutting up any such monkey-shines.

"Take my old rector, old Dr. Dabney: He confirmed you—you know he's a saint on earth if ever there was one. He takes a drink when he feels like it—and he feels like it pretty often. And he wouldn't dream of questioning the right of any of his parishioners to drink likker or to make it—if it's good likker, as mine is. Take Father Hickey, the Catholic priest: a splendid, liberal man. You don't catch him refusing a decently made toddy or arguing against it. Take the Reverend Mr. Wallcott, the Presbyterian minister: a broad-minded, public-spirited, young chap and a man of God, too. He's no ranting crank, either.

"For heaven's sake, Juanita, try to be logical about this thing. If you'd just use a little of your common sense! You've got plenty of it in other directions, the Lord knows.

"But after all, this isn't getting us anywhere, is it? I've just one more word to add and then I'm through," continued the colonel, meaning, as a man always does who says it, that he had a great many more words to add: "I'm entitled to my opinion and you're entitled to yours, although I admit it does distress me when I think that my own sister should be a leader among the little irresponsible crowd that opposes practically everything I stand for.

"You seem to look on my calling as something shameful. I look on it as something most creditable—a view in which an overwhelming majority of my fellow citizens in this old state of ours heartily concur. But let that pass. The boy's all right and you, no doubt, think you're right and I know good and well that I'm right.

"Do you want to know who else knows I'm right? The governor of this great sovereign commonwealth, that's who! Do you know what the governor has done? Only last week he volunteered, of his own free will, my dear, to permit me to use the indorsement of his distinguished name for Old Blockhouse in connection with a circular letter which I am sending out—not to saloonkeepers, mind you, but to reliable druggists, physicians, private consumers, to the homes of gentlemen.

"Here"—the colonel was rummaging through the litter on his center table—"I've got a printed copy of that circular somewhere; it just came back yesterday from the printer. If you will bear with me a moment I'd

like to read it to you. I flatter myself that not only is the language of it dignified and convincing, but that the argument I offer is, to any fair-minded person, unanswerable." Colonel Bird spoke with the vainglory of an author and a creator. "Ah, here it is. I crave your patience, my dear, for just a moment."

He cleared his throat and began to read. When he had finished with his reading he looked up and for the moment felt chagrin. Save for him, the room was empty. From the hall came the brisk swishing of voluminous skirts and petticoats; in that diminishing swish-swish was a defiance, an unyielding and unbeatable opposition. It somehow conveyed to him that while his sister was withdrawing she was by no means in retreat —that she had not been routed, she merely was signifying that for her the present engagement was ended.

His smile was dubious as he said to himself, offering self-comfort, "Well, I rather figure that last volley of mine silenced poor Juanita."

In his heart, though, he knew better than that. Because he knew the lady. He thought he knew his son, too.

He put aside the circular with its proud line in black face above the printed script, "Special reference is asked to His Excellency, the Governor of Kentucky," and set to framing a reply for a letter he had received that morning from the editor of an eastern magazine. Mr. Gilmartin, representing this magazine, had in hand the

preparation of a series of articles to be published under the title of "The Spirit of the Reawakened South." At least one instalment of this series would be devoted to the distillery interests of the Blue Grass section. So the editor had written.

Mr. Gilmartin was at present in the far South, beginning his quest after first-hand material. Somewhat later he would reach Kentucky. From Colonel Bird, as a prominent factor of this great and growing southern industry, the editor bespoke for Mr. Gilmartin such courtesies and considerations as Colonel Bird might feel inclined to extend.

The colonel squared away for his response. He would be glad to receive Mr. Gilmartin and throw open his own establishment for inspection; would be pleased to introduce the gentleman to his fellow distillers and to afford any other facilities for investigation which he might command; and finally he would be most delighted to entertain Mr. Gilmartin as a guest at his home during the distinguished gentleman's sojourn in these parts. And so on and so forth, in the colonel's most courtly manner and most eloquent style.

Reading over what he had written, he rather liked the tone of it. He would have liked to have Isham's opinion of it as well, but when he summoned David, his negro factotum—David, part of whose business it was to know everything that went on about the house but whose main business was to wait on the colonel—this competent functionary said the young boss wasn't

about; he had ridden away in his new side-bar buggy behind his smart new harness mare early that morning; had told David that probably he would be away all day, but didn't say where.

David, the ultra-discreet, had his own private notion as to the young man's possible movements but regarding this he said nothing. For it likewise was a part of David's duty, as he conceived it, and as was entirely in keeping with his racial secretiveness, not to tell everything he knew or deduced, especially if such a telling might by any possibility bring annoyance to some member of the household or precipitate what David called a "to-do."

Not that David knew anything or suspected anything improper in the fact that his young boss might be off sparking in a certain quarter and with a certain young lady; the young lady belonged to a family which, while not as well-to-do as some, held its head up with the best in the land. Still, if you blabbed too much about what really was none of your concern, the consequence might be trouble for somebody and was almost sure to be trouble for you.

So, as usual, David's disclosures stopped at a given point; they did not include his surmises. The trick was to appear on the surface all innocent frankness but underneath to maintain a stedfast reticence regarding many matters. David had that trick. Most of his race did have it and still do.

The colonel sighed a little sigh of resignation as he

enclosed the answer he had written in its envelope and handed the envelope to David to be sent in to the post-office. He wished he might see more of the boy, might be more in the boy's confidence.

★ XI ★

IN THE SPRING A YOUNG MAN'S FANCY—

TOUCHING on the possible whereabouts of his young boss, that wily person of color, David, had been right in those shrewd unspoken guesses of his. At approximately the same hour when the colonel was making his vain inquiries regarding his son, that youthful pleasure-seeker drove his mare along a secluded lane at the back side of the county. In the buggy with him was a girl of, say, eighteen or nineteen. She was rather a pretty girl, rather an unsophisticated-looking girl also, and one very simply, almost shabbily dressed.

About her there was the indefinable but unmistakable air of a girl who has been won and who is proud that she has been won and is willing to advertise her surrender to all the world. It was an air seen sometimes in a girl who has never had many suitors and who, when the right man comes wooing, capitulates very quickly and very completely to his overtures. It was an air half timid, half triumphant and altogether idolatrous.

This girl's worship was revealed in her face, was admitted by the droop of her supple young torso, by the constant fluttering touch of her hand upon her compan-

ion's arm. With her eyes she caressed him and devoured him and still she questioned him. Without saying it in so many words, she yet betrayed that she scarcely could believe so great a measure of good fortune had come to her, that she meant to cling fast to this incredible precious joy of hers, that she was prepared to go to any ends to hold it and to keep it.

Under her tight-fitting muslin bodice her breasts throbbed with a delicious pain; it seemed to her that her heart wanted to jump right out of her body. She felt like a lucky beggar maid and somehow she felt like a princess, too.

Well, it was a fit morning and a fine place for making love and for being in love. The lane down which they slowly traveled, the mare being checked to a jog, was an unfrequented crooked byway which ultimately ran into a blind end against the base of the steepest hill in the whole country. On either side it was densely wooded, where it dipped down into the bottoms of a small meandering branch which crossed it and farther on recrossed it, and where it came up again to higher ground it was checked with alternating patches of brightness and shade.

Here would be a short bare stretch simmering and bleached under the heat of an ardent day of late May; there would be a bit where the trees, marching on either flank, intercepted the hot glare, and the sunshine, filtering through the motionless leaves, made dapples and blotches on the yellowish dust, so that that particular

mottled piece of it would put you in mind of a thin long strip of a leopard's pelt. Then, on beyond, going downhill again, the trees would meet overhead, so that it was as though you approached the mouth of a long winding green tunnel.

Out in the open, pairs of white butterflies—always pairs of them—flitted and mounted and dipped; their wings intermingled as they flew and philandered together. Later on, there would be great companies of such butterflies to collect at every damp rutty spot in the road and to spring up in close hovers like living snow-squalls, when you disturbed them. Now, with a sensual abandon, they sported in pairs.

In the thickets by the creek amorous male cardinals and mocking-birds and thrashers sang to their mates on hidden nests, and in the creek itself couples of sunfish stood guard over the small round beds on which their spawn was hatching. Looking downward as you splashed through the shallows, you could see, under the ruffled water, their little bright shapes scuttling back and forth in alarm.

Lusty arrogant cock quail sat on fence posts, heads up and throats thickened, and sounded their mating whistles; and from every side came the cooing notes of mourning doves—calls as softly voluptuous as the feathered breasts from which they issued.

Some of the wayside trees were locusts and they were spilling down their overripe pendent clumps of fragrant white bloom, and these wasted blooms fairly

carpeted the earth and, as the buggy tires crushed them, sent up a smell so sweet as almost to be overpowering and so strong as almost to make the senses swoon. And, to this girl's way of thinking, the best of all, there, wedged closely beside her on the narrow springy seat above the shining turning wheels, was this splendid, good-looking lad who, as over and over again and with a great and overpowering exultation she told herself, was her lad—hers. Assuredly she, altogether and entirely and everlastingly, was his.

They said very little as they went along, their bodies touching. She was content to press very snugly against him, to glance up with covert burning glances at his profiled face. For his part he wrestled with his lusty desires, wrestled until he was dizzy and inwardly tremulous. His hat was off and little beads of perspiration stood on his forehead.

There was a small flat flask in one of his hip pockets. It had been full when he left home two hours before.

After a while and nearing the big hill which reared ahead of them like a steep blue-green barrier, they came to where the woods no longer straggled and through their gaps showed grassy, sun-burnished fields on beyond, but closed up ranks and made everything within them dark and cool. There were wild grapevines and brambles here, and clumps of wild plums and sycamores instead of locusts, and masses of maidenhair ferns. It was like entering into a private alcove, into a cloister especially devised by Nature for trysting.

All at once young Isham brought his mare to a standstill. Puzzled by this sudden stop, the girl stirred and straightened herself.

"What is it?" she asked.

"That path yonder." With the hand which held the reins he motioned to a narrow grass-grown trail that came through the undergrowth and met their lane at right angles.

"I wonder now where it leads to and what you'd find if you followed it."

"It doesn't lead anywhere in particular," she said. "There used to be a charcoal-burner's camp in there somewhere, but I think it fell down long ago."

"All the same let's explore it," he said. His left arm, which had been about her waist all this time, tightened its pressure. "Come on, sweetheart, let's—let's go give it a look. Maybe there's a nice cool place inside there where we could lie on the grass?"

"Oh, do you think we'd better?" she asked. "Suppose —suppose somebody saw us."

"Who's going to see us? Not once in a coon's age does anybody come away up here—the nearest house is a mile away, maybe two miles. We'll pull the mare over into the bushes out of sight and hitch her. Anyhow, what's the harm?"

"Oh, Isham, do you think we'd better? Hadn't we better turn around and start back? I ought to be getting home—really and truly I ought. It's—it's nearly dinner-time, isn't it?"

"Come on," he wheedled, and kissed her, his lips very hot against her flushed cheek. "We'll only be in there a little while."

She hesitated on her words, then with a catch in her voice and a reluctant gulp she let them out: "Isham, I'm—I'm afraid."

"Afraid of what—me?"

"No—not that." She shrank back a little.

"You don't say it as if you meant it. Can't you trust me?"

"You mustn't ask me that. You know I trust you. But there are times"—she spoke in a sort of loud frightened whisper—"times when I don't even dare trust myself."

"Well, if you love me, you'll do what I want you to do." He said it almost harshly. "Will you go with me, or won't you?"

"I'll go with you."

He got out. His breathing was heavy, as though he had just been running. He helped her out, and her hand was shaky and fumbling and feverish in his moist grip. She stood by while he drew the horse off into the undergrowth and made it fast to the bole of a young hackberry.

With his arm about her, and she half resisting, he drawing her along, they entered the dim pathway and went deeper and deeper into the thickets. They were in there nearly two hours.

★ XII ★

THE GENTLE ART OF DISTILLING

GILMARTIN, the writer, didn't report at Bird & Son's until well on toward the middle of August. Down toward the Gulf, the sugar-planters and the rice-planters, with their creole dishes and their cajun dishes and their seductive gin fizzes and insidious sangarees, had detained him, not exactly against his will but very much against his better judgment, until his already overstretched schedule became totally wrecked.

And before them there had been the kindly patrons and promoters of the young but thriving textile industry in North Carolina, who excelled at barbecues and Brunswick stews and lemon sours; and the solicitous naval-stores men at Savannah, who had a monopoly in the compounding of that dangerous but delicious mystery known as Chatham Artillery punch. And after them were sundry gracious cotton-planters of Alabama and elsewhere in a pleasing and friendly domain, so that with one thing and another, he was far behind his original time-table when he reached the Blue Grass.

At first sight Gilmartin quite fell in love with Bird's Nest—the place was so lovely, he thought, and with

such a simple but luxurious atmosphere to it, and his host apparently being so genuinely glad to welcome him and to provide entertainment for him and to aid him in all possible ways. Of the lady of the house he saw little, she being in a failing state of health, and of the son and heir of the house he saw next to nothing, but of the head of that house he saw a great deal during his two-week stay, which beforehand he solemnly had promised himself should positively not be more than a one-week stay.

His insight into the ethics and the peculiarities of the whisky-making business as practiced in these localities began on the evening of his arrival. Over their toddy-tumblers in the old high-ceilinged dining-room, the colonel had grown prolix and flowery.

"There, Mr. Gilmartin, how does that strike you?" he had asked as he passed a glass after preparing its amberish contents with almost a painful care—like a very conscientious concoctionist in a laboratory, or a priest before an altar, Gilmartin thought to himself.

And Gilmartin, imbibing his first tentative sip, had admitted that it struck him as being a very smooth and palatable composition indeed.

"Somewhat different, I take it, from the stuff they're beginning to peddle over the bars in your part of the world," went on Colonel Bird. "Why, suh, the last time I was in New York they almost poisoned me with those damnable high-balls that you New Yorkers have got up such a fad for here lately. Taking a jigger of that

smoky rank Scotch or Irish stuff and then drowning it in half a pint, more or less, of bubbly squirt-water and then, by heavens, drinking it!

"No wonder so many of you northern gentlemen are spoiling your tastes and ruining your stomachs. What you need, suh, is a campaign of education—a campaign to teach you what your ancestors knew and what you are forgetting up yonder in your country." It was as though he spoke of foreign parts.

"Before you've been here many hours I hope to be able to win you back to the true faith. For let me tell you, suh, there's only one likker that's properly qualified to caress a gentleman's palate in the way a gentleman's palate deserves to be caressed; and that's red likker—honest rye, if there's nothing else available, or straight Tennessee whisky, which has a greater admixture of small grains in with the corn and usually is lower in proof than our Kentucky goods—I'll explain to you presently what I mean by 'proof'—but best of all, the real uncorrupted essence, the true and uncontaminated fruitage of the perfect corn, and that, suh, is Bourbon.

"Let me tell you in a word just what constitutes the genuine old-fashioned Bourbon, which I might add, suh, is the only kind we make here or ever expect to make. Thank heaven, you'll find none of these infernal rectifiers and blenders in this immediate section. You'll have to go to Louisville or Cincinnati to meet those masquerading impostors, with their misleading labels

and their spurious goods all doctored up with high wines and prune-juices and aging oils and false coloring matters and the good Lord only knows what else; there are none of them closer.

"My brother distillers feel as I do. We are distillers, suh, not counterfeiters. We—I'm speaking of Bird & Son—we make our mash by hand in small tubs—by hand, mind you—and of the finest corn these Kentucky lands can produce—and we ferment it right there in those small tubs, and the beer we get by that treatment is first singled in copper over open wood-fires—always over open wood-fires here—and the singlings are doubled also in copper over more open wood-fires; and from the spent mash, the waste, you understand, which remains after the elimination of the alcohol by the boiling, we get a residue of slop, or as we say, sour mash, which provides the exciting properties for the next batch, so that the very soul of the grain goes on perpetuating itself, and reincarnating itself, world without end."

Now most of this—this jargon about "mashes" and "beers" and "singlings" and all—was Greek to Gilmartin's ears, but in any event the colonel's fervor fascinated him and secretly amused him a little. He continued to incline an attentive ear as the orator soared to his climax:

"And that, suh, made in small quantities—by the very nature of the process it must be made in small quantities—and, mark you, made without steam, with-

out adulterants, without acids or extracts or chemicals or any drugs whatsoever, without artificial colorings to dye it or artificial flavorings to befool you or artificial yeasts to stimulate its ripening—that, suh, is Old Blockhouse whisky. But for your own sake, Mr. Gilmartin, for the sake of your palate as well, let me beg of you never to drench red likker with seltzer water nor spoil it with fruit juices.

"Take it straight, or in a toddy or in a julep, but never otherwise under any circumstances. For Bourbon stands on its own merits—the king, suh, and the queen and the whole royal family of likkers."

"Very interesting, as I'll admit," said Gilmartin politely when the colonel had paused for a breath and a tilting of his tumbler. "And very alluring, too, as you describe it. But while I think of it, tell me please—why is it called Bourbon?"

The colonel came down to earth with almost an audible thump.

"Why is it called Bourbon?" he echoed blankly. "Why—why, to tell you the truth, I don't believe I know myself. I've been familiar with it all my life and I've been manufacturing it for nearly half of my life and it never occurred to me before to speculate on the origin of the name. I don't believe anybody else knows—we just took it for granted, the way a fellow does with things that he's been familiar with for a long time.

"I know where the word whisky comes from; I

looked it up once. It comes from the Celtic *uisge-beatha,* which afterwards was corrupted to *usquebaugh* and meant the same thing in that tongue that it meant in the old Greek—it meant 'water of life,' and a very appropriate name, too, if you're asking me. But the Bourbon part—that's another matter altogether.

"If old Jimmy Crow were alive—Mysterious Jimmy, they called him—he might know. He knew a lot about a lot of things. But Lord, old Jimmy died away back yonder. Let's see, it was before the war broke out; it must be all of thirty-five years now since he passed on. He was an eccentric Scotchman who dropped in here about 1835 from nobody ever knew exactly where —because he wouldn't tell—and started the first, and for a long time the only sizable commercial distillery that we had in Central Kentucky.

"Old Crow—that was his brand; and they're still making it down on Glen's Creek where a whole colony of plants have sprung up. He was the father of the sour-mash process, too; an improvement on the sweet-mash notion. So we honor his memory for that. Yes, sir, old Jimmy should have been able to tell you if anybody could. . . .

"Well now, in the absence of proofs let's see what theories I can offer: Just about the time they first began making red likker here in Kentucky, which was back in pioneer days, there was a craze on for French names among our people. As a result, there's a Bourbon County and a Fayette County and a town named Paris

and a town named Versailles—you'll see both of them before you leave here—so maybe they named it for Bourbon County although the legend is that at the beginning it was made in what's now a part of Scott County, which, by the way, is almost next door to us. Or, what's perhaps more probable, they maybe named it so because by its color it suggested the rich red blood of all those royalists and nobles that was being spilled so freely in the French Revolution along about then; or maybe they named it so because even away back yonder they knew it for truly regal stuff."

"Then all whisky is red or reddish to begin with?" said Gilmartin.

"Lord bless you, no. Our likker gets its tone and some of its mellowing and quite a bit of its distinctive flavor by being aged in charred barrels. There's an old tale that the valuable properties of the charcoal were found out by accident; as to that, though, I can't say. All whisky is white when it's new. You've heard, I reckon, of the powerful stuff that the natives make up in our mountains and sell without ever getting Uncle Sam's consent—moonshine?"

"Yes, but I thought it was so called because they made it at night for fear of the revenue agents."

"Not at all. It's because it's so white and clear—like liquid moonbeams. It's a mighty innocent-looking fluid, but you don't want to tamper with it much while you're standing on rocky ground—you might bruise yourself when you fall down. Yes indeed, the 'free 'stiller,' as he

calls himself, has quite a little vocabulary of his own. I reckon you never heard of such a thing as a 'blind tiger,' did you?"

Gilmartin confessed that he never had.

"Except hereabouts you probably never would," continued the colonel. "It's a term that's peculiar to the high country down here. I presume it always will be. It's like this: you'll be going along up through the mountains and in some isolated place you'll come to a tight log-shack that hasn't got any door to it that you can see nor any chimney nor any window either. Where a window ought to be there's a little squared opening that appears to be boarded up solidly, with a semicircular shelf or sill like half a barrel-head projecting out as a sort of underlip at the bottom end of the planking.

"We'll assume you're thirsty and you crave an uplifting beverage to relieve that thirst. So you get down off your horse and you walk up to that little rounded shelf and you put down on it two-bits or four-bits or six-bits or a dollar—it depends on what size flask you want—and then you get back on your horse and you ride off without looking back. It's not mountain etiquette for you to look back and, on the part of a total stranger, might even be unhealthy.

"Well, in half an hour or so you come again. While you were away, the blank-faced shutter has revolved and the money you left there has disappeared and in its place is your bottle of white likker. You take it and withdraw, taking care not to go prying about the prem-

ises or showing any undue curiosity whatsoever while you're in the vicinity.

"Afterwards you'll probably remember that the shack apparently had no eyes, so to speak, and that the mud-daubing between the logs made stripes along the walls and sort of mildly suggested a tiger's streaked coat. Hence the name. Once in a while a revenue man who doesn't care much whether he lives or dies tries to break into one of these little shebangs, but either it's suicide on the spot for him or else all he finds when he gets inside is a covered-over hole in the dirt floor—the entrance to a secret passageway leading off through the earth and coming out somewhere back in the sticks, as our mountain people call the deep timber.

"Then there's still another phrase distinctive to us here in the South that I'll bet you never heard, either. It's 'bootlegger'!"

"Another brand-new one to me," admitted the Easterner. "Would you mind elucidating 'bootlegger'?"

"Among us it means an unlicensed fellow who peddles likker at retail—a fellow that takes you up a dark alley and lets you have a swig for a nickel. You're not so apt to run across him deep back in the mountains as you are in one of these rural counties of ours that are trying the weird experiment of so-called local option. According to our lore the first one of this breed of hucksters carried his stock in a long flat tin container that was stuck down against his leg inside of his boot-top.

"There are some other curious terms in use hereabouts if I only could think of them offhand. Well, I reckon every section has its slang terms that grow out of special conditions and never get into general circulation. . . . But say, look here, suh, you're probably tired out after that long day's ride on those dusty steamcars, and there's a heap of things I want to show you and tell you about in the morning.

"Suppose we have just one more together, for a nightcap and then I'm going to escort you up to your room. You'll find a decanter by your bed in case you should wake up during the night and feel like taking a little something to put you back to sleep. It won't hurt you—I'll guarantee that; there's not a headache in a barrelful, as we love to say."

* XIII *

HOSPITALITY AS A RELIGION

THE colonel was as good as his word. In the morning there was much to be seen and to be told about, and this, for Gilmartin, was the inauguration of a round of sight-seeing and visiting and meetings with gracious, soft-voiced ladies and exuberantly cordial gentlemen who professed—and apparently felt—pleasure at making his acquaintance and said they wanted him to stay with them awhile after his visit at Bird's Nest was over.

"We'll not make any company of you," they would say. "We'll just treat you like home-folks if you'll only come." They seemed to mean it, too. This, though, was no novelty. Practically everywhere he went on his recent travels Gilmartin had encountered such attentions as these.

In due season he inspected plants which were larger and more impressive than that of Bird & Son—plants where the laborious and painstaking mixing by hand had given way to mixing by machinery, and big wooden vats had supplanted the little wooden receptacles and, in one or two instances, where steam instead

of open fires of crackling oak and hickory supplied the requisite heat. But somehow he liked the Old Blockhouse distillery with its almost primitive air and its obviously free-handed, happy-go-lucky management. For him it had a homely charm which was lacking from some of the more ambitious establishments.

He liked the yeasty, half-sweet, half-acrid smells that hung so heavy in the sheds where the white meal, having been diluted with spring-water to a thin mushy consistency, was souring in the tubs, and he liked the stronger reek which arose as the vaporized essence of this gruel was being precipitated by its passage through the curled copper "worms," and liked, too, the almost overpowering alcoholic bouquet abounding in the two bonded warehouses wherein the aged and finished product was stored in barrels racked in endless rows, battalion on battalion of them. But the great alluring smell in the bottling-house, with its gurglings and splashings and flowings, was enough just by itself to make you tipsy. That, he decided, was the most tremendous smell of them all.

There was an intermediary process—the one in which a thick creamy yellowish froth, solider than a foam, solid almost as a meringue, rose above the tops and overflowed the sides of all those small tubs set out in long ranks—which pleased Gilmartin's eye and set his nostrils to tingling. He enjoyed the spectacle of the workers at noontime when they ladled off dippers and tin cups of this *soufflé* and drank it down. They urged

him to sample of it, proclaiming it to be both refreshing and nutritious, having body to it and flavor and a fine sustaining power, they said. Some of them, so he learned, took nothing else at midday; for them this lathery stuff was a meal in itself.

"Now, suh, suppose you have a look at the office and then it'll be time for us to go and get a bite of dinner," said the colonel, when the round of the main buildings had been made. "It's a feature that's disappearing, I regret to say, from some of our distilleries whose owners want to be right up to date, as they'd put it. Thank the Lord for it, we're not reorganized to that extent yet and I hope we never will be. I still keep the office open just as I've done from the beginning and just as I aim to keep on doing."

Somewhat puzzled by the seeming intimation that the modernization of a distillery involved the doing-away-with of the bookkeeping facilities, Gilmartin accompanied his guide to a smallish brick building which formed an ell against one side of another and larger building, and, arriving, discovered that in this case the "office" was in no wise related to the business of accounting. Here a smiling and affable black man, who wore a white jacket and a long white apron, presided over what in certain respects resembled a barroom and yet plainly was no barroom. Nevertheless, there were chairs scattered about and small tables and numerous cuspidors and in one corner a very comfortable bench and facing it a counter bearing glassware and sugar

and spring-water in buckets and another bucket containing cracked ice and, most essential detail of all, a shelf-load of bottles and jugs and kegs.

"There's nothing here for sale, of course," explained Colonel Bird, correctly interpreting Gilmartin's perplexed look. "It's where Bird & Son keep open house, as you might put it, for passers-by along the turnpike who, for one reason or another, wouldn't care to come to my place of residence for some slight refreshment. Any white man who knows how to behave himself is at liberty to drop in whenever he pleases, and Jim there will serve him according to his desires, free of charge. If he wants to slip Jim a nickel or a dime, that's another matter. And that side door yonder is for our black friends. A respectable darky of this vicinity can come to that door and make known his needs and Jim will wait on him, too."

"Rather an expensive, not to say wasteful, mode of advertising, isn't it, colonel?" asked Gilmartin.

"I'd hardly call it that, suh," vouchsafed the colonel. "We don't exactly put it on the basis of advertising, seeing that practically everyone who favors us with his presence here already is fully aware of the merits of our goods. It's just sort of keeping alive an old custom that's been handed down from the early days. Besides, we don't stop always to count the pennies. Most of us, in this trade, would rather make good whisky in limited amounts than make a whole pile of dubious money; and that's the truth."

"Rather different from commercial ideals as you find them where I hail from," commented Gilmartin.

"Oh, I judge it's largely a matter of environment and industrial conditions rather than any difference in the blood," stated Colonel Bird. "Under the skin we're all pretty much the same people; I found that out when I was sashaying about, fighting against your northern armies. Plant one of us up north and I figure he'd soon get in the way of doing things the way you do 'em. But it is a fact, Mr. Gilmartin, that a good many of our people would rather be comfortably well-off than to worry themselves over the possession of great wealth.

"I doubt if you could find a millionaire in the entire county—unless it is old Tobias Lander, who started away back yonder in the sixties as a note-shaver and then worked up to be a money-lender and is now our leading private banker or else our leading usurer, just as you prefer to put it. Put him in Shylock's place and he'd never be satisfied with a mere pound of flesh—he'd want the hide and the chit'lings thrown in for good measure.

"I might add that he is not specially well-regarded by our best families. Tobias sprang from the soil and—*hem*—is still more or less grubby. Just take one look at the way the hair grows on the back of that wrinkly old neck of his and you'd know him for dunghill stock."

"Rich and yet appertains to the order of the poor white trash, eh?" commented Gilmartin.

"Quite so. I perceive you have been among our people long enough to absorb some of the shadings of our colloquialisms. I congratulate you, suh. Now, so many northern people confuse, for example, our use of the common 'you-all.' They think it is applied in the singular whereas it's invariably plural. And when we say of a person that he's poor white trash, they sometimes think we do so in the sense of meaning an individual who's destitute or at least poverty-stricken, when, as a matter of fact, the phrase has no bearing whatsoever on material possessions or the lack of them.

"Take the Sales family, of this county: They have very, very little and they are heavily burdened with debts, and because of that and because of their pride, they don't mingle much in a social way with their equals here. But they would be welcome, and properly so, under any rooftree in the entire Blue Grass. We have many such families who come and go across the thresholds in quarters where old Tobe never calls unless it's to collect on one of his ten-percent notes or foreclose on one of his damnable mortgages.

"He had me in his clutches once, but that's a long time ago when I was just starting up. I wriggled free, in due time, but I confess I left a few patches of skin in his grip. . . . Well, come on, let's see if they've got anything for dinner."

To Gilmartin it seemed they had practically everything for dinner.

He soon found out though how far short his esti-

mate of the Kentuckian's capacity for loading a dinner-table had fallen. He found that out a day or so later when he and Colonel Bird rode up the pike to dine at Squire Overton's house, a rambling shabby-appearing structure which overflowed with swarms of unidentified dependents and with small and apparently unattached darkies.

A veritable host sat down to eat—sib of Squire Overton, some of them were, and sib of Mrs. Squire Overton, and in addition to Gilmartin and the colonel, four others who had been specially invited. But all the rest of that crew, so the Northerner figured, were more or less regular dwellers under this roof.

Mentally he told himself that there must be a strain of Belgian hare somewhere in this teeming Overton breed. It was "Uncle Pliny" here and "Cousin Emmy" there and "Aunt Puss" yonder, until Gilmartin fairly grew dizzy with trying to keep the tally straight.

The food came on in caravans; it came in flotillas; it came in argosies. There were only two courses—first the meats, the hot breads, the vegetables—almost countless shoals of vegetables—the pickles and the preserves and the spicy home-made condiments; and at the last, the desserts consisting of two kinds of pie and watermelon and sliced peaches with cream and cookies and fat slices of layer cake. The coffee was served—in big cups—with the meal and not afterward.

What astonished Gilmartin was that no ardent spirits were drunk either before the meal began or during it.

Nor was there any wine. Milk, both sweet milk and buttermilk, and water and, of course, plenty of coffee—these were the drinkables. Yet he could tell that this was no household of teetotalers.

There were decanters on the high walnut sideboard, and in the course of the afternoon toddies began to circulate pretty constantly, but only among the men. He took notice that liquor was not offered to any of the womenfolk, nor did they seem to take this neglect as a slight. It would seem that among these people the use of strong waters, publicly at least and probably privately, was confined exclusively to the adult males. For the adolescent youths were left out of the drinking just as their sisters and sweethearts and mothers were.

Along about five o'clock the drinking temporarily suspended while more watermelons were being eaten, and shortly after this rite Gilmartin and the colonel went back to Bird's Nest in what the colonel called "the cool of the evening," although Gilmartin thought it still sufficiently warm for all purposes. On the way the latter sought elucidation on one or two points.

"Tell me, colonel," he asked, "isn't there a frightful amount of waste in the way you people live down here?"

"I never noticed it," said Bird. "In what way?"

"Why, the food. Take today at noon. We ate bushels of good things—there was a regular army of us—but even so it struck me that bushels more were left in the dishes."

"Oh, that," said the colonel. "Why, suh, the vittles that're left over don't go to waste. The darkies tote 'em off. The cook, you know—she'll take the pick of the leavings and take it to her house, and the others round the kitchen will pack off what's left."

"You mean steal it?"

"Oh, they don't call it stealing—if it happens to be cold vittles. We don't either. It's just—just—well, call it customary. Look at my darkies—look at David, for instance. I'd trust him with my pocketbook or my watch and they'd be as safe as if they were in a bank, but if I ever wanted to see it again I'd hate to leave, say, half of a ham or a batch of fried chicken legs lying about where he could get his old black paws on 'em."

Gilmartin pondered this disclosure for a bit. Then:

"There was one rather crabbed-looking old lady that nobody called 'grandma' or 'cousin' or 'aunt.' I judged she wasn't an outsider and yet, if she was an insider, it seemed to me she should have had her title—the same as all the others did. I'm wondering where she should be placed."

"Oh, you must mean old Miss Tabby Withers," said Colonel Bird.

"That's the one—'Miss Tabby,' " Gilmartin went on. "What about her?"

"Oh, nothing much, if you put it that way. She's a very distant connection of some of Mrs. Overton's people—related to her through her 'in-laws,' I think. She

came over once to pay the Overtons a sort of little visit and she's just been staying on ever since."

"How long would that be?"

"Well, I should say offhand that it must be going on about eight or nine years now."

"What!"

"Something like that; maybe ten years."

Gilmartin looked to see whether Colonel Bird was joking, but in his host's aspect and voice there was no suggestion of levity.

"And about how much longer would you say this little visit of hers is likely to last?" he queried softly.

"Oh, no doubt she'll be there as long as she lives," stated the colonel unsuspectingly. "You see, Miss Tabby Withers hasn't any property of her own, to speak of, or any close relatives, and of course there's plenty of room at the Overtons' and naturally if she was stuck off by herself somewhere, she'd be pretty lonesome and sour. You see how it is?"

"Yes, thank you," said Gilmartin. "I see how it is."

He saw how it was and so that night he wrote in his note-book:

"I've found out the difference between distant relatives in the North and distant relatives in the South. In the North your distant relative is like a bill collector —calls at stated intervals and stays only a few minutes. In the South your distant relative is like the inflammatory rheumatism—arrives in the fall and hangs on indefinitely."

* XIV *

IT'S NOT LIKE THAT ANY MORE

THE articles which the Easterner wrote for his magazine largely were technical and statistical. It is from certain unpublished writings of his that you get a somewhat more intimate and perhaps a more graphic picture of a state of things and an order of men which, since they almost altogether have vanished excepting for a few pale and altered traces, probably will impress you as having belonged to an era far and dimly bygone.

For those pictures out of a vanished and, to us, a seemingly very distant past, we are indebted to Gilmartin's habit of putting down each night such outstanding impressions of the day as he did not presently intend to work up into copy; and each batch of these notes, with his observations on the same, would at intervals be incorporated into a letter to his wife, it being then her task to docket and file them for possible reference in case at some later date and while doing fiction stories or novel yarns or character studies, the author might desire to draw upon his store of spare data. Many writers have this same habit. Gilmartin

never used the amassed commentaries of that southern trip of his, nevertheless the manuscripts were preserved.

Two long letters went from Bird's Nest to Mrs. Gilmartin. In the first one her husband had, among other things, this to say:

> It's been a busy week. I've been fêted, feasted, toasted, entertained, until I'm dizzy. Their desire to offer the best of what they have to the wayfarer who comes among them properly vouched for, as I have been, is almost childlike; I believe I made the same remark a month ago when I was in Mississippi. Never mind; for emphasis I'm making it all over again now.
>
> These people are very much like the people of the ruling classes in communities farther south—for verily they do constitute ruling classes—and yet in various regards are unlike them. For instance, a Tennesseean, whom your average Kentuckian in many respects very closely resembles, is usually a Southerner first of all and a Tennesseean after that; whereas the Kentuckians are Kentuckians first and after that they are Southerners. In this attitude they somewhat suggest the Virginians, from whom they mainly are descended and from whom they seem to have borrowed most of their social and civic institutions. As between them all, though, there are subtle distinctions which are

perfectly apparent to an outsider but hard to define.

Another temperamental idiosyncrasy: Kentuckians are more tolerant in their common attitude toward the North than some of their neighbors are in states where the Civil War is still a living rancorous thing. Their former prejudices seem to have been softened and tempered by their contacts with us. They're not particularly resentful over the outcome of the war. From their conversation you'd get the impression that the South suffered no actual defeat but merely laid down its arms from sheer weariness. And yet practically a quarter of a century after Appomattox, they still continue to draw an invisible line as between a Northern veteran who settled among them when hostilities were ended and one of their own who chose to side with the Northern cause or even served with the Northern armies. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the imported ex-enemy is usually a Republican and frequently a Federal office-holder, while the domestic variety, more often than not, is a stalwart and uncompromising Democrat. In other words—or rather, in their words—one is a "Yankee," and always will be, but the other is a "former Unionist."

Let me illustrate this point with one little incident that happened day before yesterday at an outdoor party given in my honor at General Peake's

wonderful old place about two miles from here: Among those present was a very stately and impressive gentleman named Major Hatcher—Caius Cassius Hatcher, no less—who, as I speedily found out, is the probable Democratic nominee for lieutenant-governor on the state ticket which will be nominated next year. (N.B. Down here they start running for office a long time in advance.) Now, nomination on the Democratic ticket is equivalent to election. People chuckle appreciatively over a statement attributed to Colonel Ingersoll that when Kentucky goes Republican he'll think about joining the church. They say it proves the colonel will remain outside the fold until the end of time. So, since this Major Hatcher wore a military title—not that that particularly signifies—and had very distinctly a martial port and bearing, and since the ex-Confederate element still dominates politics in the state, and finally since sundry gentlemen, including my genial host, whom I knew to be ex-Confederates, seemed to be on terms of affectionate comradeship with him, I naturally jumped at the conclusion that the major must be a Confederate veteran, too, and, more to make conversation than anything else, I asked him in what branch of the Southern forces he had served. At that a laugh went up, and General Peak, with his arm around the major's shoulder, said to me:

"This old scoundrel here was a dam' bluebelly.

Four years he was out gunning for us and we gunned for him. But since it was men of his stamp that afterwards clubbed in with us and saved our beloved state from the horrors of Reconstruction and carpetbaggery, why, we signify our gratitude every four years by putting one of his gang on the ticket—in some job that's mostly ornamental and where they can't do any real harm."

Speaking of titles, about every second adult who's past a certain age seems to sport one here. My friend and guide, the colonel, tells me with a twinkle in his eye, that a title is not necessarily earned. It may be acquired—bestowed, rather, by common consent—or in cases it may be inherited. A standing joke has to do with a certain Theodore Hallam (a noted wit and orator whose sayings I hear quoted wherever I go), who having been offered an honorary commission on the staff of the governor, promptly petitioned the governor to make him an aide with the rank of "mister"; he wanted, he said, to be the only man in the state who was thus distinguished and had the papers to prove it.

But my colonel is a real colonel. His title is not by courtesy. He won it through brilliant service. He didn't tell me this, though. I have heard it repeatedly from other quarters. He may be boastful touching on his business and his state and his region, but regarding his achievements in the field

I find him to be both modest and reticent. He lauds the hardihood and resolution of the men under him and cites instances of their courage or of the courage shown by some companion-at-arms at such-and-such a battle, but nearly always leaves himself out of the tale unless it be to admit that on this or that occasion he was "scared plum' limber"—which is a favorite expression of his when referring to himself. In fact, to hear him tell it, that war was a merry, almost a friendly war—a sort of prolonged four-year junket abounding in jolly battles and good-natured enemies.

Well, taking him by and large, my friend, the colonel, has a multiplicity of contradictions in his make-up. I've been saving up for the tail-end of this to tell you, if so be I could, what manner of person he is. I wish I felt competent to draw a really adequate pen-portrait of him. He must be nearing his middle fifties, but doesn't look it by at least ten years. He has an abundance of tawny hair with some gray in it and he wears it somewhat longer than is the mode for gentlemen in the East. The very considerable quantity of this fiery Bourbon which he has consumed in his time hasn't noticeably painted his nose. Indeed he has a skin like a baby's—let us say a decidedly rosy baby. Most of his compatriots hereabouts display mustaches of one of the two standard varieties—bristly or drooping; and some add defiantly wag-

gling "goatees" and some are extensively whiskered-over; but his lantern-jawed, high-cheeked, narrow face is smooth-shaven.

A sort of awkward grace is in his movements as he goes straddling along with his arms swinging and his legs taking wide strides and his head thrust slightly forward as though he were looking for something exciting or unusual—which he is. On horseback he's a picture to behold; a magnificent horseman. I judge he'll be gnarly, not to say knobby, when he gets older, but it is certain he will never be fat. He has done much reading of good literature—mainly the so-called classics—and he keeps abreast of current events and has traveled a good bit and altogether is more of a cosmopolite than the majority of his sort are hereabouts; yet at the same time there's a sort of provincial air about him, an insularity of viewpoint, if you'd care to put it that way, which is very pleasing. One minute he'll be quoting (or misquoting) one of his favorite authors; the next minute (but I think this must be an affectation with him) he's dropping back into the broadest of the outlandish idioms prevalent among the country people, and the minute after that he's off and soaring on a flight of apparently spontaneous but high-flung and rather stilted eloquence.

Some of his tastes are bucolic; in others he's quite the epicurean. Funny thing: he achieves a

dandified effect while negligently wearing garments that are old-fashioned almost to the point of being obsolete. He chews tobacco but somehow is dainty about it. I never saw such tremendously wide and glossy cuffs as he sports—big shiny cylinders of white linen starched until they rattle. In his footgear he's a regular Beau Brummell—goes in for pointed-toed, high-heeled boots, not shoes, mind you, but boots. It must keep one colored man busy about half his time just shining the colonel's boots. I judge that privately he's vain of his slim, well-kept hands and his feet, which are remarkably small for a rectangular loose-jointed man upwards of six feet in height. His exquisite deference for women is a lesson in the higher art of being polite—a thing to marvel at and envy, and yet, I figure, is perfectly natural in him. Well, most of the people down here have leisure—or take it—for the cultivation of manners and small graces. They should be wearing shining armor instead of white linen suits and black string ties.

For all his gregarious impulses, I figure him to be at heart a lonely man. His wife, whom I have seen only at rare intervals, is practically bedfast. I'd say she's not for this world very much longer. They have one son, but I don't see much of him either; he gads about pretty constantly. On those infrequent occasions when he does favor us with his company, I catch Col. B.'s eyes following him

with an eager wistfulness which is a give-away of the father's secret thoughts. He wants to believe in the youngster absolutely and still I'm sure he doubts him.

Strictly between us, I must confess that I am not greatly drawn to the young gentleman in question. He's too supercilious, too ruthless in judgment and too well pleased with himself to suit me. I imagine he has been overcoddled and overpampered to his own hurt—he's just a plumpish young bundle of conceit and selfishness, if you're asking me. He punishes the decanter rather stiffly at meals and between meals, too, I suspect; and from a word dropped here and there I gather that he fancies himself a devastating devil of a chap among the damosels. I'd put him down as having a fair share of the Lothario and a good share of the Iago in his nature.

Perhaps he comes by that honestly. They do say the colonel has been something of a homespun Don Juan himself. He still has a sort of Don Juanish gleam in his middle-aged eye, especially when there's a good-looking woman anywhere in the offing. And it seems there used to be (or perhaps there still is) a lady tucked away over at Lexington—but there, I shouldn't be peddling scandal about my most admirable host. Yet, with all that, he is all devotion, all thoughtful consideration for his wife, and she only a fading, pitiable

little wisp of a thing. I'd put him down as that somewhat rare phenomenon among married men —a man who didn't quit being a courtier after he became a husband. It's very sweet and touching to see them together—he so very solicitous about her and she so dependent on him for company and entertainment.

The son conferred the gracious boon of his presence upon us last night at supper. That was no especial treat for me. He put us both under a sort of restraint. He'd be broody and aloof for a while and then suddenly would flare up in a sort of ugly tempery outburst. He kept fiddling with his hands in an abstracted restless way that made me nervous. Possibly he had something on his mind to worry him or perhaps that's just his way. He seemed to delight in taking issue with his father and with me—was short in his speech, and before the meal was over pushed back from the table and left us most unceremoniously. I could Get Col. B.'s attitude. Mentally he was making excuses for his son; I could tell that. Still, I'd say he has an excellent capability for self-deception where the son is concerned—can will himself to look on the boy's fits of broodiness as signs of reserve, can interpret his ugly mulish stubbornness for a stout and commendable determination. It's true, though, isn't it, that what are deplorable flaws in other people become stalwart virtues when displayed by our own?

Just before he departed from us, the young autocrat bestowed what evidently was intended for a very pointed thrust at me. Apropos of something that had been said about certain distinctions in business principles as between this section and some of the larger cities along the eastern seaboard, he stared at me in a belligerent fashion and said: "What else would you expect? Your people up there are of the stock of the Puritans. You like to count the pennies. Down here we don't go in so much for shopkeeping principles and, thank God, we're not given to cheese-paring. Down here is where you'll find the strain of the Cavaliers."

After he was gone, Col. B. coughed rather deprecatingly and said to me with almost an apologetic air, that one mustn't always take too literally what young people said. It was the first time, in my hearing, he had criticized his round-faced offspring even indirectly. He went on: "The boy is merely repeating a fetish about our ancestors which you hear everywhere in this Blue Grass country, and which isn't true. I don't believe nearly so many of the aristocrats came over to America as some of our family-tree fanciers let on; and of those who did come, not all settled in the South, by any means. Bringing the thing home, my own great-grandfather was a tanner by trade and his father, so I've heard, was a runaway indenture man from the Highlands of Scotland.

And our immortal leader, Stonewall Jackson, had the makings of a perfect Pilgrim Father in him. For that matter, I've got a sister who's about as strait-laced a Puritan as you'd care to meet. There's not any too much validity, Mr. Gilmartin, to that stuff we're forever spouting about having the blood of the Cavaliers in our veins. Anyhow, we haven't got any monopoly on it."

Coming from Col. B., who can see no flaws or blemishes in his section, that was quite a frank, not to say startling admission. Right after that, though, he was showing me the other side of his nature—the vainglorious, credulous side. He was harping, as he delights to do and as all his friends delight to do, upon the incomparable superiority of the Blue Grass region over all other regions, not only in this state but anywhere, and all at once he came out with this: "There was once a very learned man among us, Mr. Gilmartin—a statesman and a scholar and one of the first United States Senators from Kentucky after Kentucky became a state—Humphrey Marshall. I refer to the original Humphrey Marshall and not to his namesake and descendant, General Humphrey Marshall, who fought for the Lost Cause. Well, back yonder at the beginning of this century, this original Humphrey Marshall wrote a two-volume history of Kentucky—a remarkable work, suh, in more respects than one. For he largely devoted one vol-

ume to denouncing his personal and political enemies, of whom he had many, and he devoted a good portion of the other volume to proving scientifically that central Kentucky was the site of the original Garden of Eden. And, upon my word, suh, I believe he was absolutely right about it. If the Earthly Paradise isn't here, where is it pray?" I looked at him to see if he was joking but he wasn't joking. Unless he fooled me, he accepted this preposterous claim as a sober verity.

Yet another facet to Col. B.'s versatility of temperament is shown, I think, by the society he keeps. He leans heavily upon the judgments of a wise, reserved elderly negro man servant called David; and perhaps his most intimate and confidential associate is an almost totally illiterate country bumpkin named Gabriel Scarr, who holds a sort of subordinate place as a deputy foreman or something of that nature in some department of the Birds' distillery. At least that is the supposition, but so far as I can tell, the main duty of this person is to follow Col. B. about wherever he goes and bow down before him—and behind him—and worship him and be his shadow and his echo and his claque. This person was the colonel's orderly in the Southern army; he's still his orderly at heart and no doubt always will be. Despite the differences in their education and their stations in life, the most familiar relations exist between

them. Wherever you see Col. B.—outdoors, at least—there you are pretty sure to see this bearded party Starr, trailing along.

Yesterday in a burst of emotionalism, he confided quite soberly and seriously, that possibly excepting Robert E. Lee, and John H. Morgan, he regarded the colonel as the best fighter the Confederacy had produced. "And, mister," he added, "that goes fur even Albert Sidney Johnston and Nathan Bedford Forrest, and they was both fustrate fightin' men, them two. Ast any old Rebel around here that served under him and he'll tell you that ef he'd 'a' keered to push hisse'f, or even ef he'd 'a' got his jest deserts, Tilla Bird would 'a' been one of our high-uppest gin'els."

These ex-Confederates freely speak of themselves, usually in a jocular way, as "Rebs" or as "Rebels," and the phrase "Rebel army" is common enough among them. But they suffer no outsider to take the same liberty. Indeed, I figure that anyone who had the hardihood, in their hearing, to refer to the late war as the "War of the Rebellion" would have a private war on his own hands.

I know I must have exhausted your stock of patience by gabbling along for page after page as I have. But you'll have to bear with me—these people fascinate me and in some regards are so very likable that, once I get started, I prattle on and on unendingly. Well, more anon.

To judge by his next instalment of notes, the idiosyncrasies of the land continued to allure Gilmartin right through to the end of his visit. In his next, for instance, he had this to say:

I'll be getting away tomorrow. In a way I'll be glad to leave, and in a way sorry. My poor stomach has earned a rest and needs it, likewise my congested liver and eke my overworked gastric juices. I've been positively gorged with food, and as for drink—well, if I had taken all that was offered to me I could be swimming in it. . . . But the country is so inviting, so gorgeously beautiful! It makes me think of Surrey or Suffolk. Remember how those southern counties entranced us when we were in England two years ago? Well, substitute thatched stone cottages for old shingle-roofed ones and put a few of the hawthorn hedges where these people have whitewashed fences, and you could fancy yourself in Surrey—the same soft greenness in the lawns, the same tidy, cultivated, fertile aspect in the fields, the same gentle roll to the earth, the same brooding air of peace and plenty, of comfortableness and contentment. If one didn't know better, one could imagine that here was a spot on the earth which never had known anything sinister or tragic or troubling, and never would.

"Shooting scrapes"—one hears a good deal

about them; sometimes it's a "cutting scrape" and rarely a "shooting-and-cutting scrape." In conversation it's never an affray or a mêlée or a battle, but a "scrape." Often, from the casual tone employed, one might be led to infer that these "scrapes," which stud the local history so thickly, are rather inconsequential, whereas they really are deadly and bloody encounters and almost always are marked by loss of life. Nearly always, too, persons of prominence are involved, and almost invariably the underlying cause has to do with family matters or with enmities growing out of political disputes or perhaps with the impugning of one gentleman's veracity by another gentleman.

I've learned that a "shooting scrape" is in no wise to be confused with a feud outbreak, such as occur so frequently between the hostile clans up in the mountains. To the Blue Grass people, the mountaineers are a race apart. Certainly in the rites governing the homicidal sacrifice there is a wide difference between the touchy lowlanders and the untutored hillmen. By preference the mountaineer shoots his enemy from ambush, not because he's an underhanded coward but because that is the safest and surest method of reducing the opposition. This method the lowlander regards as crude and coarse, not to say downright vulgar. He follows a certain prescribed credo. He causes word to be conveyed to the gentleman for whom he has

taken a dislike that on the occasion of their next public meeting there will be trouble and he suggests that the party of the second part govern himself accordingly—in other words, be armed and ready. This done, the ethics are regarded as having been complied with and, following the meeting, the survivor (if there be a survivor) is not likely to be called to account by the law.

I figure these "scrapes" are an outgrowth of the duel which formerly flourished locally—in fact flourished so freely that in order to break up the practice among the gentry of engaging in these "affairs of honor," the legislature finally passed an act providing that before taking an elective office or before becoming a qualified attorney at law, one must make oath that during the six months prior thereto, one had neither sent nor accepted a challenge nor acted as a second nor in any other capacity in a duel. That law is still on their statute-books. It killed off the dueling practice because about every other man down here goes in for the law and about every other lawyer goes in for politics and, by the same token, runs for office; but it brought about the "scrape" with its broad and liberal latitudes in the choice of weapons and the place of battle. . . . The next time I hear somebody in New York speak of a "scrape" (it probably will happen in a barber-shop) I know that involuntarily I'll flinch first and then from sheer

force of habit prick up my ears in the hope of learning the gory particulars.

This readiness to protect one's "honor" has another outgrowth which is reflected in the daily intercourse of the inhabitants. Being so prone to take offense, these individuals are very careful to guard against giving it. I never saw men who in their dealings and their conversations with one another were more punctiliously polite than these men are; so far as I have been able to judge, this applies to all classes among them. You see, so many words which in some places would pass unnoticed are "fighting words" down here. So unless one deliberately intends to provoke trouble, one does not indulge in loose language toward one's fellows. Believe it or not, but one of their leading judges not long ago rendered a dictum from the bench to the effect that a man who in anger calls a second man a liar or brands him to his face with a certain unprintable epithet—meaning by that one which locally is regarded as the deadliest insult of them all—has, in effect, delivered the first blow and therefore, so his Honor held, the aggrieved person is acting merely in self-defense, should he retaliate with violence. On the stump, in their political campaigns—and, from what I can judge, their political campaigns are continuous—an impassioned orator may cut loose with hard terms for his rivals, but when he does this he practically

is serving notice upon the opposition that he is prepared to back up his personal remarks with his private arsenal.

In divers respects their politics is a picturesque institution. In this state office-holding is a profession and a calling; sometimes is handed down from father to son. Generation after generation, it is expected of certain families that the sprightlier offshoots of those families shall go in for office-seeking. Literally, the sons and the nephews are bred up for the governorship, for membership in Congress, for lesser jobs.

But certain requisite qualifications are expected. Your young man who aspires to follow in the ancestral footprints must excel at hand-shaking, must strive unendingly to enlarge his circle of acquaintance in order to increase his potential constituency of backers, and, most important of all, must be skilled either at colloquial story-telling or at silver-tongued eloquence but preferably the latter. Your Kentuckian likes his oratory and likes it flowery and sugary and poetic. He usually gets it that way, too. So out of all this there has grown up a thing which is not exactly a political machine, as we use the term in New York, inasmuch as its success is dependent more on personal equations and personal contacts than on organized machine methods. But it's a thing that's rather in the nature of a political autocracy, a political oligarchy, as

you might say. Its directing geniuses parcel out the best jobs among a favored few and resent—generally with success—the occasional efforts of presumptuous upstarts to horn into the charmed inner groups. Some of these days there'll be an upheaval—it's bound to come—and then I predict that those who are so firmly intrenched in power, or think they are, will find themselves out in the cold, wondering what's happened. But at present writing they're still riding the wave.

I met a typical collection of members of the reigning dynasty—let's call them the "wave-riders"—yesterday at a "rally"; a Democratic "rally," of course. It was held in a gorgeous walnut grove on the Oldham stock-farm, which is only a mile or so from Bird's Nest, and apparently the whole county was on hand in its best bib and tucker, and we had speech-making enough to satisfy anybody—except possibly a native. It is apparently impossible to give him too much of that commodity. As for free food and free drink—well, if I should say there were tons of the first-named and oceans of the last-named I'd not be greatly exaggerating the true facts.

This part of it will live longest in my memory, I'm thinking. To begin with, I was introduced to "burgoo," which is a glorified and very peppery version of the "Brunswick stew"—you remember my telling you weeks ago about "Brunswick

stews"?—and is also, I should say, a distant relative of the "okra and tomato gumbo" which so entranced me last month when I was on the Gulf Coast. Well, to make a long story short, they led off by serving everybody with a tin cup of this burgoo, which is an incense to the nose and a benediction to the palate, and incidentally a complete meal in itself, according to my private opinion. But I was in a minority of one. Because here, as I speedily discovered, it was regarded as being merely a sort of appetizer for the barbecue which followed.

At a Kentucky barbecue in midsummer you are expected to eat a barbecued young squirrel or a barbecued spring chicken—or both—by way of preliminary to devouring a tremendous helping of barbecued lamb or barbecued pig, and of course there are such airy and trifling side-dishes as smoking-hot cornbread (they go in copiously for various corn-meal dishes here just as their cousins farther south go in for dishes concocted out of rice) and there are likewise "roasting ears," as they call green corn that is cooked with the shucks on it, and sweet potatoes baked in the live ashes (not the yams of the Cotton States but long, slim, knotty, double-jointed tubers, very mealy and rich) and this, that and the other thing. And then to finish it off with, you must eat enormous drippy slices of very ripe, very cold watermelon. I

thought I should burst; I know I gave way at several of the seams.

Also I met, and was conquered by, the mint julep in the full flower of its perfection. I thought the Virginians could contrive a julep, but I appreciate now, as I indite these lines while caressing a throbbing and decidedly achy brow, that the really supreme masters of that delectable art reside in the Bourbon Belt. They have something—call it a touch—which other experts, however deft, cannot quite attain. I contended with the julep (and went down fighting, my face to the persuasive and insidious foe) and I heard a poetic effusion—it was true literature, or else impressed my englamored consciousness as being true literature at the moment—on the subject of the same; under that heading I shall have much to tell you when I see you.

For the time, let it suffice to say that I never suffered—or enjoyed—a happier defeat. I'll add just this: The first Kentucky julep an alien drinks is a sensation; the second is a rhythmic benefaction, but the third one is a serious error. . . .

I shall be clearing out of here tomorrow. It's just as well. After yesterday, anything more, however pleasant, would be in the nature of an anticlimax. When I am an old man, full of rheumatism and reminiscences and vain regrets, I know I shall hark back to that picture of yesterday—

with the lovely opulent countryside so lordly and generous, and so crowded with knightly souls all intent on killing the visiting stranger with kindness.

Oh, those shorn blue-grass fields! And oh, the mint patches by the springs! And oh, and *ouch,* the mint juleps!

✶ XV ✶

THE SHOOTING SCRAPE

WHERE the colonel sat in a rocking-chair on the front porch of Bird's Nest he was half hidden behind a curtaining of green "dish-rag" vines with their long green pods hanging thick, and "balsam vines" all studded with sensitive red globules that were ready to pop open at a touch, and gourd vines laden with fat slick calabashes that had begun to turn yellow. He had to bend forward to see out from under this frieze. When he did this he could look down a cool green avenue that had been washed clean and was glistening with a damp freshness.

Shortly after dinner-time a hard shower had fallen, and now it was the tail of the afternoon and the sun was out again, making diamonds of the drops drying on the leaves and bringing pleasant smells out of the wet dust of the driveway. This had been a rainy summer, so far, and the country had none of the parched, burnt-out thirsty look which it wore if a prolonged drought came at this season of the year.

The country was at its best now, he thought to himself—so fecund and bountiful. In the springtime it

made you think of a pretty girl in a new frock. But now it would put you in mind of a tranquil happy mother with a child at her heart.

The colonel felt finely content. He had a Courier-Journal, that morning's issue, on his knees but he was not reading it. He had not even turned to the editorial page to see what Colonel Watterson had to say today—which ordinarily was the first thing he would do when David put the paper in his hands after the mail had been brought out from town. He was just sitting there in the shade enjoying the weather and the world—the refreshing sweetness of the one, the soft serenity of the other.

That whiskered sentimentalist, Mr. Gabriel Scarr, came languidly around the corner of the house. He was in his shirt-sleeves, his straw hat in his hand. He wore no collar; he never had been seen wearing one.

"Hello, ker'nel," he said. "How you makin' out?"

"Finest kind. How's it with you?"

"Feelin' a whole heap better sence I've done got the upper hand of that there tech of summer complaint," answered Mr. Scarr, as he draped himself in a stoop on a top step of the porch where the shadow cut across the sunshine, with his spread knees almost up to the level of his bent shoulders and his brawny red hands clasped and dangling between his knees. "But I shorely was puny these last three-four days, whut with the cramp colic hittin' me ever' little while and actin' like it was fixin' to tear me in two acrost the middle. I'll

think twice't next time before I eat a whole half of a peach cobbler at one settin'." He groaned in retrospect of his recent suffering. "Darkies back yonder in the kitchen was jest tellin' me Mizz Bird felt well enough to go fur a little buggy-ride this evenin'. Ain't that nice, now?"

"I should say so. I just got back from driving her over to General Peak's. What's more, I left her there for a while, so's she could look at the pretty things—clothes and presents and all—that little Frances May Peak is going to have for her wedding next Saturday. You know how women are about things like that? It took something like that to get her up out of bed and out of her room. It's the first time she's been downstairs in five or six weeks. Now she'll have something to think about and talk about for a month. I'm mighty glad she felt strong enough to venture out."

"That there visitin' scribe got away this mornin', didn't he?"

"Yes. I took him to the train myself. Nice clever fellow, wasn't he?"

"Powerful clever—fur a Yankee. Me and him got right well acquainted before we was done with one another."

"I liked him," stated Colonel Bird. "He fitted right into things. I'm going to miss him. I think he had a good time down here; in fact I'm sure he did. He certainly seemed to enjoy that blowout day before yesterday at Captain Oldham's—that is, he seemed to be

enjoying it up to the time when he sort of passed out. Too bad you had to miss it, Gabe."

"Wasn't it, now?" Mr. Scarr's tone was deeply regretful. "That's shorely one shindig that I'm mad at myself I wasn't able to git to it. Who-all was there?"

"Everybody in the land, mighty near it."

"Who-all spoke?"

"Oh, first and last, half a dozen. Joe Blackburn, for one. And Colonel Breckinridge, for another."

"Lawdy, lawdy!" lamented Mr. Scarr. "How was the speakin'?"

"I never heard better. Blackburn had three or four new stories, too—new ones to me, anyhow."

"And me still laid up with the gripes! Wasn't that jest my cussed luck?"

"To me, though, the best part of it all was something from one of the Lexington papers that young Todd Gayle, from Owen County, read aloud."

"How could arything out of ary newspaper whutsoever match up with Joe Blackburn norratin' or Ker'nel Billy Breckenridge orratin'?" demanded Mr. Scarr incredulously.

"You wait till you hear it," said Colonel Bird. "I've got it right here—begged it off of Todd Gayle for my scrap-book." He got a pocketbook out of his inner breast pocket and from it produced a folded clipping which he spread out flat. "Listen to this, Gabe Scarr, and when I'm through then tell me what you think of it."

The colonel cleared his throat and began to read as follows: " 'In the Blue Grass there is a softer sentiment —a gentler soul. There where the wind makes waves of the wheat and scents itself with the aroma of new-mown hay, there is no contest with the world outside. On summer days when from his throne the great sun dictates his commands, one may look forth across broad acres where the long grass falls and rises as the winds may blow it. He can see the billowy slopes, far off, each heaving as the zephyrs touch it with caressing hand. Sigh of the earth, with never a sob—a tender sigh, a lover's touch, she gives the favored land. And the moon smiles at her caressing and the sun gives benediction to the lovers. Nature and earth are one—married by the wind and sun and whispering leaflets on the happy trees.' "

"Gentlemen, hush!" murmured Mr. Scarr in a gentle ecstasy, as his patron paused for breath.

The colonel went on: " 'Then comes the zenith of man's pleasure. Then comes the julep—the mint julep. Who has not tasted one has lived in vain. The honey of Hymettus brought no such solace to the soul; the nectar of the gods is tame beside it. It is the very dream of drinks, the vision of sweet quaffings. The Bourbon and the mint are lovers. In the same land they live, on the same food are fostered. The mint dips its infant leaf into the same stream that makes the Bourbon what it is. The corn grows in the level lands through which small streams meander. By the brook-side the mint grows.

As the little wavelets pass they glide up to kiss the feet of the growing mint, and the mint bends to salute them. Gracious and kind it is, living only for the sake of others. The crushing of it only makes its nearness more apparent. Like a woman's heart, it gives its sweetest aroma when bruised. Among the first to greet the spring, it comes. Beside the gurgling brooks that make music in the pastures it lives and thrives. When the blue grass begins to shoot its gentle sprays toward the sun, mint comes, and its sweetest soul drinks at the crystal brook. It is virgin then. But soon it must be married to old Bourbon. His great heart, his warmth of temperament, and that affinity which no one understands, demands the wedding. How shall it be? Take from the cold spring some water, pure as angels are; mix it with sugar till it seems like oil. Then take a glass and crush your mint within it with a spoon—crush it around the borders of the glass and leave no place untouched. Then throw the mint away—it is a sacrifice. Fill with cracked ice the glass; pour in the quantity of Bourbon which you want. It trickles slowly through the ice. Let it have time to cool, then pour your sugared water over it. No spoon is needed; no stirring allowed —just let it stand a moment. Then around the brim place sprigs of mint, so that the one who drinks may find taste and odor at one draft.' "

"Ain't that language fur you?" rhapsodized the entranced listener as the reader stopped. "I'm askin' you —ain't it?"

The colonel gestured for attention and read on to the end:

" 'Then when it is made, sip it slowly. August suns are shining, the breath of the south wind is upon you. It is fragrant, cold and sweet—it is seductive. No maiden's kiss is tenderer or more refreshing, no maiden's touch could be more passionate. Sip it and dream—you cannot dream amiss. Sip it and dream—it is a dream itself. No other land can give so sweet solace for your cares; no other liquor soothes you so in melancholy days. Sip it and say there is no solace for the soul, no tonic for the body like old Bourbon whisky.' "

When he had finished, he looked toward Mr. Scarr. For a briefened space that gentleman squatted in silence, seeming to be stricken dumb with the rapture of it. At length the spell was broken and in a voice of reverence he spoke:

"Ker'nel, who wrote that—this here fellow Shakespeare that you're always readin' after?"

"No, it wasn't Shakespeare." The colonel choked down a chuckle.

"Then it must 'a' been Gin'el George Washington."

"No, not him, either."

"Sounds to me mighty like it might 'a' been Gin'el Washington. Well, ef it wasn't neither one of them, who in the Lawd's name could it 'a' been?"

"Man named Smith."

"Go 'way!"

"Yes, I tell you."

"Ker'nel, you don't mean to set there and claim a man with a common name like Smith could 'a' writ that piece?"

"I do. How about Judge J. Soule Smith at Lexington?"

"Oh, him!" Mr. Scarr's skepticism faded out. "Well, maybe he mout've. Seems like I heared tell somewheres that he fit in our army. Yes, he mebbe could. But I still say it sounds to me a heap like Gin'el Washington done it." He peered down the leafy aisle of the driveway, bringing his head still lower to see beneath the draping boughs which met and interlaced above it. "Ain't that a buggy stoppin' at our gate to let somebody out? . . . Yes, that's whut 'tis. And one feller's comin' in and the rig's goin' on ag'in, lickety-split. But why didn't they drive on in ef they wanted to see somebody?"

"Who is it?"

"Kind of a paunchy, pot-bellied feller, seems like. Acts kind of funny—like he was in a hurry to git here and yit seems to be hangin' back, sorter . . . Why, it's Cap'n O'Shea."

"O'Shea, eh? He's too fat to be traveling fast afoot. . . . By Jove, Gabe, that reminds me: It was just such a day as this—not this time of year but ca'm and pleasant, like this is—and just about this hour, twenty-odd years ago when Felix O'Shea came dusting up to where I sat here on this porch to say we'd been delivered out of the hands of the forces of evil. I'll never forget it—it was just before the boy was born.

"A lot of things happened to me just about then—fine things, too. And fine things have kept on happening ever since. . . . Well, time flies and history repeats itself." He was standing now to welcome his friend. "Hello, Felix!" he called out. "Glad to see you. I was just saying to Gabe here that—" He broke off, seeing the look on O'Shea's hot round face. "Why, what's wrong, man?" He asked it sharply.

"Old friend," began O'Shea, and his voice was very troubled, "old friend, I bring bad news to this house. It breaks my heart that I should be the one to bring it."

The colonel's hand went out and, through the shrouding vines, found one of the porch pillars. "I'm waiting," he said quietly.

"Prepare yourself for a hard blow—a great shock," temporized O'Shea. There was about the rotund ex-congressman no whit of his customary knack for self-dramatization.

"Go on. What's amiss with me or mine?"

"Something gravely amiss with your very own."

"Isham?"

"Yes—Isham." O'Shea's head was drooping.

"What of Isham?" All the rubicund color had drained from the colonel's face.

"There's been a shooting scrape—and Isham was in it. Isham's hurt."

The colonel did not flinch or reel. But he stiffened through all his frame, and the arm against the pillar grew rigid as a crowbar.

"Is he badly hurt?"

"Worse than that."

"O'Shea, is my son dead?"

"No, but—hold steady, dear man—but they say—the doctors do—there's no chance for him. They say it's only a matter of hours. They sent me to tell you: the sorriest day's work of my life."

"Who shot my son?"

"Young Dick Sales—half an hour ago, about."

"In fair fight?"

"Yes, fair enough. It happened in town—alongside Barlow's store just across from my office. I saw it—part of it—out of my window. It was fair fight."

"Go on."

"It seems young Sales sent him a warning about ten minutes before they met. Isham was in the back end of Barlow's. He came out of the side door—and Sales was waiting for him in the little alleyway that's there. And right there's where it happened—three shots in all. Isham was hit twice. Sales is not injured."

"My boy—he—he—" For the first time the father faltered. A sudden dread of something—something which might make this terrible thing yet more terrible for him—was revealed by that momentary hesitation. He wrenched it out then: "He stood up to him? He didn't—he didn't—"

"His wounds are in front, Attila—both of them." He could not tell this stricken man that his boy, trapped, cornered, desperate, had been backing away, a

plea sputtering on his lips, his unfired pistol dancing in his futile quaking grip, when those two slugs of lead struck and felled him.

Nobody ever did tell the colonel that. Mercifully they hushed it up in the newspapers, mercifully glossed it over, kept it out of the record at the coroner's inquest—this last being a perfunctory formality anyhow.

"Scarr!" snapped the colonel, his blazing eyes fixed on O'Shea and he not looking where his henchman stood, poised and expectant of some such command from him.

"Yes, ker'nel?"

"Get me a horse saddled—quick!"

Past the corner of the house lumbered Scarr, and Colonel Bird put the next question to O'Shea and now there was a slow deliberate deadliness, a fearsome lethal intent, apparent in the words:

"O'Shea, why did young Dick Sales—a boy that I've known all his life and thought well of—why did he shoot down my son?"

"Because—because of a girl."

"What girl?"

"His own sister—Dolly Sales."

"And why because of his sister?"

"She's three months gone."

The colonel's tone as he spoke again had become flat, listless almost.

"Go on, please, O'Shea."

"Today—this morning sometime—this girl, this lit-

tle Dolly Sales owned up to her mother. I reckon she couldn't hide it any longer. She owned up to her mother first and then later on to her father and her two brothers. She said it was Isham who'd wronged her. And so her brother Dick, the older one, broke away and put out for town—to have his satisfaction."

"Beyond her word, what proof, if any, was there against my son?"

"He admitted it himself—to me. I— Mother of God, Attila Bird, how I hate to tell you this!"

"Won't you hurry along, please?"

"I'm doing my best. It was like this: I saw it—part of it. I ran across the street to where they were. I caught Sales' arm. I said to him: 'Why have you done this?' He said to me, pointing to Isham: 'He knows—ask him why.' Then he shook me off and walked out of the alley and handed his pistol to City Marshal Collins. Collins got the story of it out of him and brought it back to me.

"But before that I went to Isham and knelt by him—he was down. And he told me, too. He said, lying there on the ground, that he—he had deflowered her. He confessed it fully. Under promise of marriage he did it; then changed his mind, he said. He told me he was sorry. He said, now that it was too late, he'd like to make up for it, if he only could.

"And just a little bit later he made the same statement before witnesses to your rector, old Dr. Dabney. Somebody brought him in; he was passing along Main

Street. If it was his own son he couldn't have been more distressed. That was after we'd picked Isham up and carried him into Dr. Twyman's office. He's there now. Twyman is with him and Dr. Dupree, too. They're doing what they can—what little they can.

"So then I jumped in the first rig I saw—it was Tom Galloway's—and made Galloway bring me here. I got Galloway to drop me out at your gate—I wanted to do this job alone—and I sent him on up the pike to fetch my wife and his wife. I thought there should be some ladies here to stay with your wife after she heard about it."

"My wife is not here—she is over at General Peak's. I will ask you, O'Shea, to go and meet those ladies and stop them and tell them to go on to General Peak's instead of coming here. Go now, please."

So soon a wall-eyed negro boy, who led a caparisoned horse, was running toward them across the lawn from the stables to the left and in the rear Scarr panted along, leading a second horse. And so soon, from the kitchen behind them there arose a wailing sound—voices of negro women in a hysteria of lamentation.

O'Shea turned to go on his new errand.

"Wait one moment," bade Colonel Bird, and the politician spun about.

"When you left my boy—was he conscious?"

"Perfectly so?"

"How much longer do they give him to live—the doctors?"

"A few hours—but only a few."

"Now go please, O'Shea, and head off that buggy."

O'Shea trotted down the drive. Before he reached the gate, two horsemen passed him, galloping hard—Colonel Bird in the lead, giving his horse its head, Gabe Scarr at his heels.

At the porch steps the colonel had been in the act of swinging himself into the saddle when he became aware of Scarr alongside him and already mounted.

"I goes with you," Scarr had said, reading the other's look.

"I don't need anyone to go with me on this mission," Colonel Bird had said.

"I goes with you," Scarr had answered doggedly. "I rid with you into trouble many a time before now. I'm a-ridin' with you today. Ker'nel, air you heeled?"

The colonel had not answered that question; the colonel's feet were in the stirrups and he was off, wet clods flying, displaced bits of limestone pelting, and Scarr a short length behind him.

In that order they went by O'Shea, in that same order swung east out of the gateway and took the turnpike, and in that order came, a quarter of a mile along, to where a dirt road crossed the pike. Town lay ahead, due eastward; General Peak's was to the left.

When the colonel neither rode straight on nor took the left turn, but reined off to the right, Gabe Scarr was surer than ever there would be need of him before this day's business was done, and he brought his pistol

forth from his hip pocket—it might be jostled out—and thrust it inside his shirt, and thus and so for four miles, neither speaking a word, the two horsemen rode.

* XVI *

AN OFFER IN WEDLOCK

THERE were those four miles of riding, until they came to a district of poor lands—the only district in that whole county, barring the broken country still farther west along the river, where the soil was scanty. Still at a pounding gallop, and their horses all lathered now with sweat, they labored up and partly over a low twisting ridge of shaly outcrop and just beyond its crest drew near to a place where the fences were snaggled and broken and weeds possessed the fields; and here, in an unkempt dooryard among trees, stood a house that had the look upon it of improvidence and poverty. On this house all the shutters were drawn as though in sign of mourning, and from it there issued, at their thumping approach, the sounds of a woman's weeping, shrill and unrestrained.

Also at their nearer approach the scarred front door was thrown open, and out upon the rickety porch came a man of fifty-five or so, who held in his hands, which fumbled and shook, a double-barreled shotgun; and immediately there followed behind him a middle-aged woman, her hair disheveled and awry, her face greatly

contorted, and sobs and outcries shaking her; and she beating with both her fists at her bosom. And behind her in turn appeared a blubbering half-grown boy and in his hands was a kitchen knife.

"Aha, I thought so," said Gabe Scarr to himself, and thrusting forward and sideways, he checked his horse to a standstill fifty feet from the porch and he pulled his weapon and swung it up, cavalry-style, the muzzle in the air.

"Gabe, put away that pistol," snapped the colonel. "I'm handling this alone."

For once in his life Gabe refused to obey his commander; he didn't put it away; he still held it so, ready for action.

Colonel Bird dropped his reins on the neck of his blown, halted horse and in a controlled and steady fashion he said to these three distracted dwellers of this house:

"I ask that no hostile move be made until I have said what I have to say. I have not come to make war upon you."

"Then why have you come—and armed? You and that ruffian with you?" demanded the man of the house, his voice choking with his grief and his rage. His voice was not firm, not positive, as the colonel's had been. It was indecisive; it wavered and shook.

"I have drawn no weapon," said Colonel Bird. "Nor shall I draw one on you, suh, now or hereafter."

"Then what brings you?"

"Yes," shrieked the woman, "what brings you then? Isn't it enough that your breed already have brought shame and suffering upon me and mine, but you must come, too? Oh, the shame of it! The shame of it!" Harder than ever, she belabored her breasts with her clenched hands.

"If you want your revenge, why don't you say so?" cried out her husband in a crack-toned, frantic way. "My son has shot your son—the word has just now come to us. My son's quarrel was just. It's my quarrel —I take it up. If you want a fight, I'm ready for you."

But his very frenzied manner showed he was not ready. A failure at lesser affairs all his life, this man betrayed himself as the completest of failures in this, the topmost crisis of his life. Between the two men facing each other, a great difference was apparent. Both were fathers, both were desolated, both bereft. But this one here had about him a great strength of restraint, a great purpose revealing itself in his look and his tone; and that one just yonder quavered and quivered on the edge of a collapse.

"I do not come here for vengeance," said Colonel Bird. "I have no right to ask for vengeance. I have come to do such justice as I may for the injury inflicted on you and yours by one of mine. I have come to make such amends as may be made at this late hour."

"If you dare to offer me money, I'll kill you in your tracks, like a dog." This issued in a hoarse burst from the elder Sales. "As God is my judge, I'll kill you."

"Charlton Sales," said Colonel Bird, "I would not so demean myself nor would I so belittle you. May I enter your doors to say what I wish to say?"

"No, no, no!" It was the woman who shouted that at him.

"Then will you ask your daughter to come out here so that she may hear, in your presence, what I have to say?"

"No, I tell you, no!" The man made this decision.

"Oh, my daughter! Oh, my poor child! Oh, my poor children!" the mother lamented. "My boy in jail! My daughter disgraced! Oh, that I should live to see this day!"

"Your son is not in jail, or if he is he'll not stay there. I myself will go bail for him if that should be necessary. If needs be, I shall go before the grand jury, or before the court and ask for his acquittal. But that will not be necessary either—you know it and I know it."

All three of the Sales were comparatively silent now, all three glaring at him in a sort of stupefaction.

"Nor, if I can help it, shall your daughter suffer disgrace."

Describing the scene afterwards, Gabe Scarr said that at this point the colonel's voice rang, as Gabe often had heard it ring, going into battle.

"You can't save her from it—it's too late, it's too late," wailed Mrs. Sales.

"Madam, bear with me another moment," pleaded

Colonel Bird. "I have not yet gone to my son on his death-bed. I have not seen my beloved wife since this blow fell; she, too, may be on her death-bed. While there still was time, I have come straightway, as my first duty, to you. I come to ask that your daughter, Dolly Sales, may be married to my son, Isham Bird."

It was as though they had not heard him. Dumbly, motionless, they all three glared at him. In the hush, Mr. Scarr made an audible noise, pouching his unrequired revolver.

"Suh and madam," said Colonel Bird, his words falling now into a measured and formal cadence, "I have the honor, on behalf of my son, to ask for him the hand of your daughter in holy and honorable wedlock."

From behind the huddle of their bodies there emerged into view the girl herself. She was bareheaded; wore a sleazy house-gown. Her eyes were like big glowing black ink-blots in the dead white of her face. Her face was strained and twisted, and there was a kind of terrible, stiff, dead composure upon it, but it was not swollen. It was plain that this day she had shed no tears. Perhaps on this dread day she had none left to shed.

Quickly, without wavering, she walked down the creaking steps and quickly she advanced until she stood by Colonel Bird's horse, she all this while looking up at him. Her figure still was virginal in its slimness. The slanting sunlight brought out the sheen on her coal-

black hair. Her head was erect, not drooping or abashed.

"Colonel Bird, I was listening—I heard you," she said, and saying it, looked stedfastly at him and never once toward her own people. "I loved him. I still love him. He was the only one I ever loved—I gave him all I had. He took it but I gave it. Now this—this is for me to decide, not for my father and mother. If you want me to—and he wants me to—I'll marry him—if there's time."

"There's time, my child," he told her, very gently. "God in His mercy will not deny us that. But we must hurry. Minutes are precious things to us. Will you ride with me?"

"I'll ride with you," she said.

"Gabe," ordered the colonel, "kindly lift my daughter—for, child, you are my daughter now and forever —will you kindly lift my daughter up here behind me on this horse? Put your arm around me, honey," he said when she had been swung up, "and hold tight—we travel fast."

With no backward glance from either of them, they instantly were off and away out of the dooryard and over and on down the slope of the low rocky hill, and Gabe Scarr coming on behind, like a rear-guard.

* XVII *

VANISHED PICTURES

IT WAS late when they got to Bird's Nest, driving in a borrowed buggy—the colonel and the colonel's son's widow. It was after midnight, and a full moon, the harvest-moon, was beginning to climb down the walls of the sky.

They drove up the long straight driveway until the old house loomed beyond in its chaste simple dignity. It had the look on it of a house of grief. Through its blinds, that were half drawn, and through its open front door came the blurred radiance from gaslights discreetly hooded and turned low. Upon the porch figures were clumped, many of them.

In the hallway there were other figures passing and repassing, with that stealthy, almost furtive step we instinctively use in a house upon which some woful thing has fallen. Seeing it, you would know that when these persons spoke, their voices would be pitched low, that a woman finishing a sentence would finish it with slow sighs and small melancholy clucking sounds.

All at once the girl in the nearing buggy began to shiver very violently. Until this moment she had main-

tained unbroken the unnatural frozen calm which had upborne her for long hours. She put one hand in entreaty upon her father-in-law's arm.

"Oh, colonel," she said, "oh, colonel, I've gone through so much. Must I go through this, too?"

"It's best, child," he said, "best for us all that we should get it over and done with. It'll be just one more hard ordeal—perhaps the hardest one of all—but I know you'll face it like a little soldier. You've been a little soldier tonight and I'm proud of you. When this is over you shall rest. Your room is ready for you. Your mother should be there waiting for you—if you want her. I sent Scarr back for her while we were in town—told him to bring her in by the back way in case she didn't want to meet anyone here. You'll do what I want you to do, won't you, honey?"

She nodded.

"That's fine," he said, and kissed her on her forehead where the coils of black hair met the white skin.

At the wheezing of their buggy's wheels, one form had detached itself from the group about the porch steps and came toward them. It was the black man David. Mechanically he took their horse's head.

"Ker'nel," he asked falteringly, "ker'nel, de young boss—is—is—"

"He's gone, David," said Colonel Bird. "Less than an hour ago he went. They'll be bringing him home in a little while. We came on ahead. Have things made ready."

David began to sob and sniffle. If the truth is to be known, his sorrow was more for his master than for the slain one.

"Hush, please, David," said the colonel, and David strove to choke back his sobbing. "You must go and make things ready, but first I want you to go inside there with us and hear what I have to say. It will be for your ears and afterwards you will carry the word for me to my servants and to all my work-people."

"Yassuh, ker'nel," answered David.

The colonel descended from the buggy, gave his hand to the girl, and when she was on the earth, gave her his arm. They passed indoors between lines of men who made way for them, standing with bared heads—employees of Bird & Son, one of the government gaugers on station at the distillery, small farmers of the vicinity, "renters," "croppers-on-shares," hired hands. Negroes, both men and women, were visible where they hovered, partly hidden, at the corners of the house, and from some of them now came a subdued, half-crooned, half-wailed fusing of wordless lamentations.

And so the tall straight man and the trembling girl, having entered the hallway, with David following just behind them, stopped in the parlor door and faced a semicircle of men and women who at sight of these two rose from the chairs in which they had been sitting. Their expectant eyes all focused upon the pair at the threshold.

"My friends," said the colonel, and now he was lift-

ing his voice so that those without and those on beyond at the farther end of the long hallway might also hear, "my friends, my son is dead. This"—he disengaged his arm from hers and put it about her waist—"this is my son's wife. From this hour thenceforward, this house is her house, this home is to be her home. Her wishes will be obeyed by all beneath my roof, as the wishes of the other mistress of this house are obeyed. My people will be her people.

"Now, listen further, please, and give heed to what I have to say, for what I say to you I likewise would say, through you, to everyone of whatsoever station in life: If there is among you one single woman who feels that she cannot give to this lady, who is my son's wife and my daughter-in-law, the fullest measure of respect, the fullest measure of kindness which is due an honored and beloved member of this household, I ask that woman to leave these premises now and never again to darken my doors. If there is one man anywhere who ever dares to slight her, to flout her in private or in public, or to raise his voice against her, and I hear of it —and I shall make it my business to hear of it—that man answers personally to me for it. Is that plain to you all?"

From all there came a startled murmuring as of assent.

"I am very grateful to you for your sympathy," said the colonel, bowing to them. "I shall be still more grateful for the consideration and the affection which in

future you bestow upon my son's widow. You will please excuse us, we are going now to my wife."

Still with his arm about her, he turned her away and together the two of them slowly mounted the stairs and disappeared from the sight of those they left below. A moment later, these spellbound ones heard a door-latch click, heard a door open and close, and then their lips were freed and a restrained but eager buzz-buzz of their voices ensued—a whispered, sibilant chorus with morbidity in it and smothered excitement.

What took place behind that closed bedroom door upstairs was to be known only by piecemeal and only in part. The distributer of these supplementary reports was old Mrs. Hovercure, a lady whose tongue, as the saying went, was hung in the middle and wagged both ways.

Mrs. Hovercure was given to thanking the saints in heaven that she was not unduly curious and that she never meddled in other people's affairs; and—be it said for her—there was no denying that a neighborly desire to offer comfort and support by her presence, and to perform such ministrations as might fall her way, had prompted her to hurry this night to this stricken household. But it somehow did happen that she chanced to be tiptoeing through the upper hallway at the time when the colonel and the young woman entered the senior Mrs. Bird's chamber, and somehow it likewise did happen that she lingered there long enough to hear certain things.

She gathered, from murmurings and other sounds, that the colonel asked those there with his wife to withdraw temporarily into an inner room adjoining, and that they complied. Then there seemed to be a brief period of silence, or at least Mrs. Hovercure could catch no words, although surely words must have been spoken and though, too, she strained her ear-drums until they fairly creaked; then from the invalid was a sharp revealing wail of agony and then, a little later, there was the broken voice of the girl crying out:

"Oh, don't turn away from me—don't turn away from me like that! It was all my fault, I take all the blame—but forgive me for it and don't turn your face away from me!"

And then, immediately on this, the colonel's lady, saying very clearly:

"Poor child, you mustn't say that. You loved him; so you loved what was a part—the dearest part—of me. There, child, kiss me and let me kiss you—there! And don't ask me to forgive you. It is we—my husband and I—who should beg for him your forgiveness. I bless you with my kisses. But, child"—this very wearily—"if I turn my head to the wall now, it is because my heart is broken and I am tired of looking at this world, and because I only want to shut my eyes and keep them shut until I can go to be with him. . . . Now, Attila, take her to her own mother."

Mrs. Hovercure certainly did circulate to and fro during the next few days.

It was getting along toward daylight. Down one panel of the half-opened front door a black crape streamer hung. David, having served those who, in accordance with the custom, "sat up with the body," came out upon the porch into the fading moonlight bearing coffee and whisky on a silver tray.

On the porch were two men—the colonel, sitting on a top step with his face in his hands, and behind and above him, in a sort of protecting posture, Gabriel Scarr, leaning against a pillar. Colonel Bird shook his head when David came to him, and after lingering alongside him a minute in an indecisive way, David turned to Scarr, who waved aside the coffee but took a tumbler of the stinging raw liquor. Slowly David went indoors, groaning as he went.

Time passed, and the colonel, without taking his hands down, spoke. Since the first bringing of the news no witness had seen him cry. But now the big tears began to trickle through his fingers.

"Gabe," he said, choking a little on his words, "I've been sitting here trying to see him as he used to be. I've been trying to recreate the picture of his as he was when he was a baby—a round-faced, curly-headed little boy-baby playing around this yard. I can't do it, Gabe; the picture's gone, it's broken, it's gone forever. Somehow I know that. And then I tried to see him again as he looked only this morning when he rode down this drive and turned in the saddle after he got just past that biggest walnut tree yonder, so full of life

and youthfulness—turned and waved his hand back at me.

"He didn't always do that but this morning he did. He was waving good-by to me, Gabe. I can't make that picture come back either—it's gone, too. Gabe, I only can see him as he was at the last—lying there in Twyman's office with his mouth twisted and his face like chalk and his eyes looking up at me as though begging me to help him, and his poor riddled body wrapped and swathed in those bandages—those bloody bandages, Gabe.

"That's how I see him—slipping away from me, going, going, and afraid to go. That's how I see him. That's how I always shall see him, I know that. And that's to be my punishment—for my share in this day's work."

Mr. Scarr did what he never had done before and what he never again would do. He stooped awkwardly down and put his arm around the colonel's slumped shape and squeezed him hard.

"Ker'nel," he said, "please don't be sayin' that. You had no sheer in this day's work exceptin' the sheer of a true Kintucky gentleman."

"No, Gabe, you're wrong. I had my share in it; a long time ago I began to have my share in it. And this —this thing—is to be my punishment."

His head sank lower and the tears flowed faster.

* XVIII *

A GAP IS BRIDGED

MOST of the time, until the end of all mortal things came for her, the colonel's wife did keep her face turned to the wall. With the going of Isham, the will to go on living passed out of her. It left her pithless and sapped, without effort, without spirit. She never rose from her bed again after that night when her husband walked in where she lay to tell her their boy was dead and this harrowed, shivering, dry-eyed girl that he led by the hand was their boy's widow.

You might say that with those same impetuous quick shots of his, young Dick Sales had killed not one but two of the Birds. His second victim died in five months from that night, which would make it about a month before her grandson was escorted into this disordered world.

Less than four years more, and Bird's Nest began to have the look about it of a womanless place. The servants did their duties by the kitchen and the pantries and the bedrooms and the rest of it, but did them after the fashion of servants who work with no watchful chatelaine to supervise what goes on. The ragamuffin

aspect of the flower-beds, the little swirls and arabesques of dust in back corners, the very hang of the curtains at the windows—all askew at this window, all bunched at that window—advertised that this was a house which lacked a competent mistress.

Passing there on a pleasant afternoon, you might see, somewhere back among the trees, an angular white-haired gentleman, approaching sixty and looking it—people said the colonel had aged a whole heap these last few years; and, keeping him company, a staid-faced, sober-acting small boy. Or perhaps a little further along in the nineties, you might meet them out riding together, the grandfather on his stallion Manassas, and the grandson on his pony White Stockings; or run across them down along the creek or at the distillery. But always this pair would seem quite content to be together, although there were frequent occasions when Mr. Gabriel Scarr made a welcomed third member of their party.

Even when he was very small, the boy apparently did not crave playmates of his own years provided he could be with his grandfather and, as for the grandfather, there was a saying about the place that he just naturally hated to have the little fellow out of his sight for more than an hour or two on a stretch. At a period when the average boy is consorting with other boys at games or mischief, this boy would be gravely harkening while his grandfather talked to him about the business or about the state of the state or the state of the nation.

In this peculiar association he grew older and seemed older than he was. His name was John Morgan Bird—Morgan for short.

He knew he had a mother, or rather he knew he had had one, but of her he remembered nothing at all. She had gone away from him when he was a baby and she never came back. He knew he had had a complete set of grandparents whose name was Sales, but this was by hearsay only; they had moved to Colorado before he was born.

Later he would hear that his official grandfather, who was "Daddy" to him, had financed their moving, had provided also the funds to give them a fresh start out yonder in the West. It seemed he had had two uncles, also, and both named Sales, but to him in his childhood these uncles were merely vague names, seldom mentioned; they were not even memories. He called Mr. Scarr "Uncle Gabe" and accepted him as such, which mightily tickled that elderly romanticist.

One of these real uncles of his, the elder one, committed suicide before he was thirty and before little Morgan was seven. Dick Sales had not been the sort to take human life and then get over it. He might hold that the blood on his hands had been justifiably shed—undoubtedly, with his background, he would hold to that—but even so, remorse cankered within him and finally, or so it was believed, drove him to turn on the gas in a hotel room in Denver. Long after that the nephew was to learn, and eventually the more fully to

appreciate, what part this Dick Sales had played in his own life.

Since it was inevitable that he must learn it, his grandfather told him one memorable night on the eve of his fifteenth birthday. Of his remaining uncle, all ken was lost so far as Bird's Nest was concerned. He vanished out of the boy's recollection just as the boy's mother long since had vanished.

The vanishment of his mother was a somewhat obscured phase of the tragedy of this household. Thinking back on former days, as people in a self-centered community will, the people of this community might put two and two together—and did—and get a result presumably satisfactory to themselves, but the true facts in the case were known to Colonel Bird alone. If he saw fit to relate them to anyone else whatsoever, that one must have been an exceedingly close-mouthed individual, since they were not repeated abroad.

The truth of the matter was that this Mrs. Dolly Sales Bird, having given so much of her love to the man who was her sweetheart for a few months and her husband for less than an hour, seemed to have no great store of love left in her for bestowal upon the offspring of that melodramatic mating. Or possibly it was because of shocks succeeding shocks with such devastating rapidity, while she still was a girl, that some proper womanly element in her first was deranged, then altogether destroyed.

Within the span of a half of a year, she had been

sweetheart and bride, widow and mother, and all these, too, under distorted conditions that had no parallel in this locality. In any event, a sort of fixed and static frigidity descended upon her before ever her husband's body was underground; soon it completely enveloped her.

Thus it followed she cared but little—or at least outwardly and, so far as might be judged, seemed to care but little—for the baby that was ushered into life in her room at Bird's Nest one bitter, snow-stormy February night. She wanted to forget many things, if she could; and the sight of him made her remember them. She put the situation practically in those words on the day she went to her father-in-law and told him she wanted to be freed of this obligation so that she might go away.

That, though, was when the child was about three years old—a healthy, curiously sedate little tike. In the meanwhile she had nursed him and tended him faithfully enough—no fault to be found with her there. She rarely left the place; the neighbors called her a recluse.

She went about the house and the grounds, a silent, isolated figure, with eyes like deep black stars and a face blanked and expressionless, like an ice-bound pool, rendering to the colonel a chilled respect, neglecting no motherly office, slighting no housekeeping responsibility reposed in her; but seeing no old friends, nor making any new ones, either among the Bird connection, or among her own kith; giving no confidences and

inviting none. Automatically and mechanically competent, she was; and a young and comely and somber shape in her plain dark dress, with the lustrous black hair coifed snugly about her head like a casque of burnished iron.

When on that day she sought out Colonel Bird and told him she desired to go away, he neither agreed with her nor argued against the decision she had made. He gave her an allowance—a much larger allowance than she wished to take—and told her he would write her regularly regarding the boy and hoped she would write to him regularly; and sure enough, within a week or two she was gone, and a trained nurse—the first trained nurse ever seen in those parts—had been brought on from the East and installed in the nursery to supervise the rearing of little Morgan and to rule over the secretly rebellious black woman who had attended him from the beginning.

Dolly Bird elected to go West. She passed through Colorado, where her parents were established, but she did not stop by to see them; in fact, did not even advise them in advance of her coming. It was as though she desired to break every skein that bound her, sentimentally or otherwise, to her spoiled and ravished girlhood.

She presently wrote back to the colonel to say she was living in California; had enrolled as a student at a normal college maintained by the state; was going to take up teaching in order that she might have both occupation and vocation; besides, as soon as might be,

she hoped to become self-supporting. At intervals she wrote him more letters—respectful, brief, passionless letters which he dutifully answered, telling her of the growth and progress of her son.

This went on for upwards of four years. Then she sent on a letter that was unlike its predecessors out of that same source.

For one thing, it contained some real news:

I am getting married [so she wrote]. I am still young and in spite of all that has gone before, I begin to feel now that it may be possible for me to gather up the broken pieces of my life and make something out of them. The man I am marrying is a Mr. Swenson, a ranchman of Scandinavian descent, who lives up here in this lovely Santa Clara valley. He is a kind man, steady and straight and dependable. He is already well-off; I think some day he will be wealthy.

He knows all there is to know about me. When he proposed to me I told him everything—what happened seven years back and what happened so soon after that. Whatever else I may have been, I have tried to be honest—if not with myself at least with others. In spite of what I told him, he still wanted to marry me. So before this reaches you I will be Mrs. Oscar Swenson, post-office address as before. My husband is willing for me to send for my son—

The colonel's heart missed a beat and the lines swam and blurred together before his eyes.

—and is willing, he says, to adopt him legally, as his own son. But I do not want this. I know you need the child's company—and I do not. I shall never need him nor will he ever need me. As I feel now, I think I never want to see him any more. I tore up all the pictures of him which from time to time you mailed me. To some people this might sound heartless, but you, who always have shown me such consideration—you, I am sure, will understand even if no one else does. Except of course my husband. In his quiet way, which is so different from your way and yet in some ways so like it, he is the understanding kind.

You have reared Morgan. Reading between the lines of your letters to me, I know how dearly you must love him—how much he means to you and will keep on meaning to you. So I want you to have him for your own. He already is that, of course, but if papers are required in order that he may be absolutely yours by law as by every other tie he already is, I am asking you to undertake the necessary formalities and send the necessary documents to my husband's firm of lawyers. Their card is enclosed.

Nor do I intend from now on to accept the allowance which you so generously have kept on

sending me even after I have ceased to need it. Please do not send me any more checks; I shall only have to return them to you, which would hurt both of us. And whatever rights or claims, if any, I have on your estate I hereby relinquish. Please give whatever you have to give—all of it, every cent—to Morgan. I don't think I shall ever write to you again, colonel. So a thousand thanks for all you have done for me—and mine.

Very painstakingly Colonel Bird refolded the letter along its original creases, replaced it in its envelope and put it in a drawer of his desk which held a sheaf of envelopes addressed to him in the same handwriting. He had a desk in a lower-floor room of his home and here he kept his private correspondence and treasured a few keepsakes and transacted various of his more intimate affairs. Having filed the letter, he carefully pigeonholed the card which had come with it, making mental note to get in touch with Felix O'Shea and have O'Shea in turn communicate with these California lawyers.

Then he very loudly called for David, and when David, who was growing a bit tottery on his underpinning and exceedingly deaf, entered from the dining-room in which he had been pottering about making a great show of doing a very little, the colonel said:

"Where's Morgan?"

"W'ich, ker-nel?" asked David, cupping a creased black hand behind his better ear.

"Morgan!" repeated the colonel, raising his voice. "Where's Morgan?"

"Whoo-ee!" David wheezed appreciatively. "Mout 'a' knowed he'd be de one you wants—he always is de one. Jes' now seed him out on de back po'ch wid de nussin' w'ite lady." That was David's way of referring to Miss Harris, the trained nurse, now turning the corner of her fifth year of service.

"Send him on in here to me, please," said the colonel.

"Know 'nuff to do 'at very same thing widout you tellin' me," said David, and wheezed again.

The seven-year-old came and stood by his grandfather, his small hands resting on the grandfather's knee.

"Morgan," said the colonel, "what have I always told you about your mother?"

The child replied in the tone of one who repeats a lesson well memorized:

"Told me my mama was a good lady and sweet and pretty. Told me I must always think that about my mama and when I grew up if anybody says she's not, I've got to fight him."

"That's right, boy," agreed the colonel. "What else have I told you about your mother?"

"Told me that maybe some of these days she'd be coming back home to see me again or else maybe I'd be going way off on the steam-cars to see her."

"That's it, too. I did tell you that, and I didn't mean to be telling you any stories, either. But Morgan, your

mother's not coming back—never, any more. From now on, I don't want you to ask where she is or wonder why she doesn't come. But just the same, I want you to go on thinking to yourself that your mother is a pretty lady and good and sweet. I want you to think that way about her always. Understand?"

"Yes, suh," said Morgan, and like a mandarin in miniature, gravely nodded his tawny head several times.

"Now, there's one other thing I want to tell you, and you mustn't forget that, either." The colonel's arm about the child's waist tightened its clasp. "From now on, you're my boy—the only boy I've got, the only boy I'm ever going to have or ever want to have."

"But Daddy"—and Morgan lifted a puzzled face—"haven't I always been your boy?"

"You bet you have!" assented the colonel. "But now, Morgan, you're more my boy than you've ever been before. You're going to stay here with me always—nobody is ever going to be able to take you away from me."

"Just you and me," said Morgan.

"That's it, that's it," agreed his grandfather. "Now run and get your cap. I want you to go with me while I show you something."

"Something pretty, Daddy?"

"Well, it's always been the prettiest sight in the world to me," stated the colonel. "I'm hoping that when you grow up it'll be just as pretty to you."

The little boy retrieved his cap from the back porch

and, holding his grandfather's hand, trotted alongside as they left the house and came, after a short walk, to the nearer shore of Bird's Fork, where, with merely the width of a hauling road between, the front elevation of the main distillery building stood up before them.

They stopped, and Colonel Bird pointed.

"Do you see that sign over the door," he asked, "—that big plank with all those gold letters on it?"

"Yes, suh."

"Well, on that plank it says: 'Bird & Son.' Do you know what that means?"

"Means you and me, I spect," hazarded the child.

"Hurrah for you!" exclaimed his grandfather delightedly. "You got it right the very first guess. It means more than that, though. It means that from now on, we two—just we two—are the bosses of that house and all the other houses around it. I'm the big boss and you're the little boss. Everything over there belongs to us. And as I get older, you'll help me run it."

"Don't get older, Daddy. Please just stay the way you are now. I like you awful much the way you are now."

"Well, I'll try not to get older any faster than I can help. Still, I'll probably get old after a while—there doesn't appear to be any way of stopping it. And when I do get old and tired and want to quit and rest up, why, then, you'll boss it all for both of us. And when I die—"

"Don't die, Daddy. You mustn't die."

"I don't aim to, anyhow not for quite a spell. I've got too much to go on living for. But when I do die—that'll be a long, long time from now, I reckon, when you're a big grown-up man—why, then, everything on this whole place will be yours, and you're to go on running it just exactly the way your daddy has run it ever since—oh, well, since ever and ever so far back. You see, it means—that big sign yonder and this walk of ours and this talk we're having, and all—it means that we're partners."

"Uncle Gabe, he's all the time calling me his little pardner," said Morgan. "Is that the same as this?"

"Well, yes and no. You're his little partner everywhere else except right here. But here at the distillery you're my partner and I'm your partner and there isn't anybody else in it but just the two of us. 'Bird,' that's for me, and 'Son,' that's for you, just as the sign says."

"I like that," said the child. "I like to be 'Son.' "

From that hour forward, Colonel Bird scarcely ever called his grandson "Morgan," or, as he sometimes had when presenting him to adults, "Master John Morgan Bird." He called him "Son," and eventually began to think of him as his son. To him, in time, it was almost as though he had never had any other son.

Even after he had neared his seventies, there was a lot of resiliency to the colonel's temperament. He was, as we'd put it, great on the rebound. You see, he had that sustaining buoyant sense of humor in him.

Now, on the other hand, this grandson of his, young Morgan, had no great sense of humor. However, for this lack he had compensations in his nature—a stedfastness, for example, and an honesty and singleness of purpose, which marked him almost, as you might say, from the cradle onward.

It was as though while yet in the womb he had been endowed with gravity and solidity, things which caused grown people—who could think of no apter way for describing him and so fell back on a hackneyed and insufficient phrase—to speak of him as "one of those old-fashioned children." Unchanged in these regards but rather all the more fixed in them, he sprouted out of childhood into sapling boyhood—a reserved, serious, dignified boy, not quick of speech and outwardly at least not especially sprightly in his mental processes.

Still, this much was true of him: What he heard he remembered, what he remembered he profited by, and what thing he put his hand to, that thing he finished.

It was perhaps as well for him that he had been so constituted, for while he still was in his early teens, his grandfather confided in him and trusted in him as he did in none other; and what his grandfather told him, young Morgan filed away in his tidy and indexed mind for future reference. For all the differences in their ages, they made a good pair of yokefellows—the one so volatile and explosive, the other so steady and deliberate.

When time came to think about packing Morgan off

to college somewhere, the boy said, very positively, that he didn't want to go; he wanted to stay on right where he was, he said, and grow up in the business. The colonel was of two ways of thinking about that proposition: he desired that Morgan should be handsomely schooled, and he craved with a most tremendous craving for the continuance of the companionship between them.

In the end, the youngster had his way, whereat the colonel was privately not displeased. He was beginning to realize that he needed a prop and a staff for his steps now.

* XIX *

ENTER THE GOLDEN AGE

PEOPLE have called that first decade of the twentieth century the Golden Age of this earth and notably of this republic. Not so much while it was passing as afterwards, and looking backwards, they have called it that. Maybe-so it was and maybe-so it wasn't, but certainly it proved to be a decade unprecedented for material advancement and, as many have claimed, for spiritual progress, moral growth, betterment in living conditions, social conditions, industrial conditions.

Trains ran faster than they ever had run before—or since either—for that matter. Steamships larger and more powerful, and infinitely more luxurious than the seas ever before had cradled, plied those seas. They who once derisively had cried out, "Git a horse!" at the first of the automobiles, began to wonder whether it would be possible after a while, what with things going the way they seemed to be going, to git a horse.

The need for change, the yearning and the pressure for change, had for long been in the air. Men had sensed it. Wiser men had trimmed their sails to catch

these strong young winds a-blowing. The changes came, many of them revolutionary and upsetting to tradition. They came even into the conservative and slow-moving and previously self-satisfied commonwealth of Kentucky. They came piling fast once they got started.

That most eminent of American skeptics, who long before and for a joke had announced that when Kentucky went Republican he seriously would consider joining the church, died just before the world rounded the last milestone of the passing century, but, even so, lived long enough to have it said of him that he, being a man of his word, was now under the painful necessity of joining not one church but two; and had he lived a few months longer, there would have been a third church for him to join. The split over populism had made the first fissures in the political terrain. The split over free silver—the colonel, like most of his class, was a "Gold Standard" man that campaign—widened the cracks of party solidarity.

Then along came this man Goebel, this son of a Pennsylvania German and hence by birth a "Yankee"; he came along with his machine and his shrewdly manufactured revolt against the "Railroad Ring" and precipitated the yet greater earthquake that rifted to pieces the ancient office-holding oligarchy of which Gilmartin had written to Mrs. Gilmartin, predicting the advent of this cataclysmic day. What Gilmartin did not foresee, but what came to pass, was that out of the travail and the rending-apart of old coalitions, there

arose divers strange and motley figures—"poor whites" from the Knobs, lanky malcontents out of the long-slighted mountains, ambitious self-anointed disciples of a new era from the "Barrens" and the "Bear-grass," the "Pennyrile" and the "Purchase"; men who fought, some of them, from opposing angles but all inspired with a common design to assault the confounded Blue Grass plutocrats in their last tottering strongholds.

Among these impious iconoclasts was one who bobbed up in the colonel's own county—in that saw-fretted stretch of it overlooking the river—and the name of this one was B. Gill Simcox, and he a most persevering and determined young apostle of the doctrine of expediency, an opportunist from who laid the rail.

There was a second man, one Buckingham Braydon. And the same was an uncouth but a wily man and a manager of destinies and a born picker of winners; and at the first, being at that particular time a strict party man, he opposed the aims of the said B. Gill Simcox, the latter being—at any time—a chronic fusionist, who presently ran for the congressional nomination on one unorthodox ticket and got beaten and then was running on another hybridized ticket for something else only to be beaten again, and then, still undaunted and hungrier than ever for power, formed fresh alliances and laid his plans to run in due season for something else again.

Of this pair, Colonel Bird was moved to speak spicy

words. Of the Honorable Braydon he said here was just a plain hopeless corrupt dam' scoundrel, and of the Honorable Simcox he said there was a person who'd change sides quicker than a cat could jump—and give the cat the start at that. What he did not say was that the last-named was by way of being his very distant kinsman—a descendant of a collateral ancestor of his. The colonel, while in no wise a snob, was not particularly proud of the connection.

The Burley growers felt, and by their altered fronts acknowledged, the dawning of a newer day; they formed a small combine of their own to fight a greater and infinitely more powerful combine. The race-horse breeders ceased to be the race-horse breeders of yore; or at least alien figures began to crowd out old-timers who retired or went broke, began to fill the gaps left by old-timers who died off.

For every well-known stock-farm that came on the market—it was remarkable to note how many of them, all of a sudden, were coming on the market—there appeared to be a buyer in the person of some rich amateur fancier from up north somewhere. Fine upstanding generous fellows, these mainly were, and full of enterprise and smart ideas for improving the thoroughbred strains and ready to scatter dollars where dimes had been spent, but different, vastly different both in thought and in action, from the oldsters whose niches they had usurped.

Out of this transformed coterie there was evolved

the Pari-Mutuel Club, a compact and shrewdly devised and shrewdly run organization, built on the wreckage of the defunct eighty-year-old Jockey Club and having a more than passive interest in legislation and judicial decisions affecting the welfare of the sport of kings as carried on in the state and incidentally the country at large. The just-now-mentioned Mr. Braydon had a finger in this pie. For verily he was one who could combine his private activities with his concern for the public weal in so deft and subtle a manner that it was difficult to detect where, with him, business left off and politics began, or vice versa. If you wanted to keep his finger out of your pie you had to hide the pie.

So what with horse-raising on an improved basis and with a new alignment, and tobacco-raising converted out of its former status, there was left unimpaired and as before, but one of that historic and honorable triumvirate of outstanding Blue Grass industries, to wit: the distilling of Bourbon whisky—the good old, blazing old, potent old, dangerous old, maddening old red-eye.

There, safely entrenched in power and influence and in the public estimation as locally expressed, still sat the distillers, like so many kings on so many thrones, and, with the capacity for self-cajolery which frequently has characterized kings on thrones, they feared no foe. In a way, they were monopolists.

Wasn't it conceded by all as a thing true as gospel writ, that only where the bird's-eye limestone underlay the blue-grass lands and the limestone water spouted

up out of the limestone rifts, could real Bourbon be made? It was so conceded. Secure in that sweet heritage, the distillers maintained, with but slight modifications, the hallowed standards, the hallowed theories, the hallowed prejudices. Especially the prejudices.

But for all that, they were being ringed in with enemies, were being pressed upon from without. Their empire had become an island set in a hostile and battering ocean. But perversely they would look no farther than the ends of their own noses.

For a typical example of their common attitude, take our old colonel, now launched into his seventies but hale and hearty and still full of spunk. He had, as they had, only contempt, vituperative contempt, for certain groups of opposition within the trade—the "Whisky Trust crowd" as he called them, up yonder in Peoria, Illinois, the "Dutch crowd" in Cincinnati, the "Rectifying crowd" in Louisville.

For the "Irish crowd" at Owensboro and the "Jew crowd" down at Paducah, and the "Tennessee crowd" below the state line, he had tolerance and a tempering of good-will, looking upon these men as rivals established outside the proper orbit of production, but even so, dealing in more or less authentic goods. This likewise was the view entertained with respect to the "Rye crowds" in Maryland and Pennsylvania and even in Canada, provided, however, that such far-away competitors be distillers exclusively and not blenders.

All others than these, though, were to be scorned as

unworthy traffickers in fabricated and bogus wares. Importers from foreign parts did not count, one way or the other, since what they imported did not resemble, either in flavor or color, the genuine Bourbon. And wholesalers, taking them by and large, were a poor lot, an unscrupulous lot, given falsely to labeling false goods and addicted to sharp practices which brought down disrepute upon the whole traffic.

That, in short, was the way Colonel Bird felt about it. That was the way his brethren here in the Blue Grass, practically without exception, felt about it.

The recognized and admitted trouble was that people generally did not understand the ins and outs of this business; the people were overly inclined to lump the sheep with the goats; what the people at large needed was better information touching on the merits of good whisky and the demerits of bad whisky and spurious whisky. Colonel Bird went abroad saying as much; went diligently to and fro proclaiming facts to prove his points.

Of course now—and this was the constant burden of his refrain—of course there never would be a time in this country when the Federal power seriously would interfere with the honest traders, the authentic manufacturers. Restrictions? Yes, perhaps. More stringent regulations? Undoubtedly. But meddlesome sumptuary legislation? Never.

The very thought was incredible and inconceivable. What counties did, what states did, was another mat-

ter. "I believe in self-government, in the principle of state sovereignty, having fought nearly four years in defense of that principle," the colonel would add magnanimously.

But what the states, many of them, were doing offered a concrete illustration of an increasingly and alarmingly prevalent phase of the public mind; that was what he claimed; but in his position he stood almost alone. Since he failed to enlist any of his compatriots in a campaign of education of the masses, the colonel dug deeply down in his own resources for funds to print and circulate a broadside of a pamphlet which he himself wrote and signed.

His first mistake was that he did write it, which is another way of saying that with fireworksy denunciations and poetic quotations and Scriptural references—the Master's Miracle at the wedding-feast of Cana, St. Paul on the advisability of taking a little something for the stomach's sake and the Psalmist's favorite recipe for gladdening the heart of man—he sought, single-handed, to engage the fluctuating attentions of a generation which, did you come begging for its ear, desired to have the message rendered down good and snappy, like the click of a cash-register, say, or the smart clash and rattle of a patent adding-machine.

The colonel's second mistake was that, being swept away by vainglory of authorship and pride as an originator, he spent entirely too much money on that cherished tract of his. Even he realized that, and the

realization of it carried him to a point where he, who usually was so candid and aboveboard, with Morgan, concealed from Morgan the figures that would reveal how deeply this vain crusading had cut into the firm's working capital.

Morgan was a long-legged gangling six-footer now and would be a voter, come that next November, and, as his grandfather often bragged, knew Bourbon-making from the sprouting of the corn to the pasting of Uncle Sam's bottled-in-bond stamp over the cork.

In their outlook upon the adverse domestic sentiments and the curtailed domestic markets in such-and-such localities, Colonel Bird's resident confrères were inclined to a bland complacency. Almost to the last man-jack of them, they refused to be excited over current conditions and future prospects. In answer to his concerned queries, they had their stock counter-arguments:

What of it that so many western and mid-western states had by popular vote gone hell-bent for local option? What of it even that state after state of the Old Solid South likewise had gone or was giving unmistakable signs of going down the same arid road until soon only two—Kentucky here on the Border and faithful, reliable old Louisiana—soon would be left? What of it—and here confessedly they brought the issue straight to their own hearthstones—what of it that of Kentucky's counties only about one in six still was a "wet" county, all the rest being "dry"?

Summed up, it merely meant—now didn't it?—that the demand for the goods had concentrated, with no noticeable shrinking in volume. And now that the buying public was gradually being schooled to an understanding of the basic distinction between true liquor that was properly aged and this doctored-up fake stuff that any rectifier could make overnight in a back room upstairs, out of high wines and prune-juices—the fight before Congress for the amending of the Pure Food Law had helped illuminatingly there—why, it stood to reason that pretty soon discriminating purchasers in the open territory would be calling for more and more of the real whisky and taking less and less of the cheap imitations. And how about this? How about the national Prohibition strength as expressed in ballot at the last Presidential elections? Had it notably increased? Not a bit of it, suh.

There was a sane way to look at these passing annoyances. Then why not look at them in a sane way?

After a while the wave would recede. After a while, when the spasm had abated, the current would start running the other way. People would find out, as always they had found out before, when these crazy reformers and these jack-leg preachers had been at 'em, that you can't legislate a man's natural and proper appetite out of him, that you can't cut in between him and his personal desires and his personal liberty without bringing on a backwash of revolt which swings everybody again to the old reliable moorings.

Thus and so they put it, until Colonel Bird's futile single note of trepidation was swallowed up and lost beneath a chorus of confident voices. After a year or two he quit piping his cry in the wilderness and indeed finally was able to convince himself that perhaps after all he had been making mountains out of mole-hills.

Hence, and also because it is human nature to try to ignore that which potentially is disagreeable, he and his fellows ignored the rising of a cloud against the fair horizon of their most thriving industry. It was a cloud—this agitation for an eighteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States—which at the beginning was no larger, as you might say, than a man's hand.

It spread, though. Lordy, how it did expand and swell and go bulging across our national firmament! But—and here's a funny thing—but, as we look back on our recent times, it seems strange that the run of the human flock should have been so oblivious to it, or at least so unheedful of its spreading. Well, no doubt if the truth were known history in the making always has been like that.

An epochal event, a great transition, is something which afterwards we reflect upon and marvel at, but while it is transpiring we are not noticeably excited; we take it as a matter of course—like butchers' bills and taxes and colds in the head. Or else we say: "This thing which is threatened"—or, as the case may be: "This thing which is promised, can't happen. It's a

sheer moral impossibility that it should happen. Let's forget it." And some of us keep on saying that, in a diminishing chorus, even after it actually has happened to us.

Besides, in this instance, there presently arose some great black thundercaps which, thanks to the wisdom of the devisers and proponents of the original proposition, served as a screen for its movements—a screen behind which it most shrewdly and effectively was maneuvered and manipulated. When the storm of a war impends, when the air is surcharged with war talk, war danger, war preparations and, finally, war itself, people take on a unanimity of purpose, a singleness of thought, which drives other considerations out of the minds of most. Under cover of a war you sometimes may prosecute and accomplish matters that are in no wise related to the carrying-on of war.

Young Morgan Bird was one among the sundry millions who on the call of his country dropped all else and went to camp to learn how to fight. He stayed in camp until he went overseas, and while he was away his grandfather missed him very sorely. To the colonel it was as though his right arm and the best lobe of his brain had been snatched from him.

In the business, because of war-time regulations, there now were new problems, unforeseen complications; there were minor vexations and superimposed technicalities accumulating day by day. He contended with the swarm of them, asking no help or advice from

any outsiders; nor did he inflict the tally of his troubles upon Morgan in the letters he wrote to the boy. He grew fretful at times; he made errors, costly ones, as it turned out.

Figure it out this way: With years, the colonel's philosophy had toned and mellowed—his friends often spoke of that—but perhaps his judgment had gone adrift. Be that as it may, it was true that, consulting no one but himself, he ventured into investments—speculations, really—which did not turn out well.

Probably at his age he should have stuck to the trade he knew. Still, that trade temporarily was being turned upside down. The whole world was being turned upside down.

* XX *

THE YOUNG MEN GO TO WAR

WHATEVER may have occurred later, there certainly was detectable no weakening in the colonel's ripened faculties as he talked with Morgan on that spring day in '17 when Morgan came to him to say that the President had called for volunteers and that next morning he would be putting his name down.

After he had been sworn in and had gone away for his training, the younger man liked to think back on that talk, meanwhile recreating in his mind the image of his grandfather and the sound of his grandfather's voice, and the picture of Mr. Scarr standing by, a faithful satellite to a greater luminary, and making it all unanimous. It seemed to him that never had his grandfather shown to better advantage or been more pungent or more sparkling of speech.

Colonel Bird did not begin by congratulating Morgan upon his decision. All he said was:

"Well, son, it's always been the rule among the Birds that if their country went to war, the able-bodied Birds went along with their country. I didn't figure you'd be the exception to the rule."

"Boy," put in Mr. Scarr, "don't you let 'em go stickin' you into no brash Yankee outfit. Yankees air all right in their way, and they'll fight you, too—I found that out many's the year before you was born—but they ain't organized the way we air down here in God's country.

"You pick you out a gang of your own kind of people where you kin have the kind of vittles you've been used to eatin' and hear the kind of talk you've always heared talked, and 'sociate with the kind of young fellers you've been raised with. I only wish't I was young enough and spry enough to go 'long with you and put you onto the ropes."

"Me too, Gabe," said Colonel Bird, wistfully and ungrammatically. "I'd like to hit one good hard lick for the flag before my time comes—as hard a lick as some of our boys hit against it when we were off soldiering together."

"I'm afraid, Uncle Gabe, I won't be able to pick and choose to suit myself," said Morgan, hiding a slow smile. "I guess I'll have to go where I'm sent."

"You jest tell 'em who your grandpaw is and I reckin there won't be no trouble about that part of it," counseled Mr. Scarr. "And fur the Lord's sake git into the calvary, where a gentleman belongs, and stay in it."

"Wherever he's put he'll be in good company," said the colonel. "That's one thing we don't have to worry about. . . . Let's see, now, son: Going into this big war, you're just about the same age that I was coming

out of that other big one. I started off as a captain; you're enlisting as a private. Maybe you'll stay a private —you never can tell."

"Not a chancet," proclaimed Mr. Scarr. For once, the subordinate planet was taking issue with the sun. "Not when they find out whut kind of stock he's got in him. Not ef he does like whut I'm advisin' him to do."

"Private or not, it doesn't matter," said Colonel Bird. "I'd a heap rather see you stepping into the ranks the way you're doing than to have you hanging about trying to exert influence and get yourself a commission and maybe an easy berth.

"You go ahead and get you some discipline, learn how to take orders and how to carry them out. Then, if promotion should come, you'll be qualified to give orders intelligently and to know whether they're being properly executed.

"These Germans have earned a first-class hiding and the main job is to give it to 'em—to lick a little sense into their heads. After that's done, it'll be time to talk about being friends with them again. I agree with our President in a good many ways, but I can't say I agree with him when he intimates that we can hate their government and what it stands for and at the same minute think well of the German common soldier and the people behind the common soldier.

"I claim you can't cherish any really deep and lasting affection for a fellow at a moment when you're engaged in trying to stick a bayonet through him. Either

your affection is going to languish or your bayonet-work won't be anything to brag about. For the time being, you've got to dislike him very intensely indeed.

"When it's all over and he's ready to own up that he's licked, why, then it'll be time to think about shaking hands and starting all over again on a decent basis of understanding. But during the heat of the argument, don't be throwing any kisses at him. Better throw something that'll hurt when it lands, and put your whole heart into it, too.

"Even so, if I were you, son, I wouldn't be squandering all my natural hate on the enemy. Save a little teenchy bit of it for some of our allies—in case we should win. If we should lose, the situation will be different. A bunch of losers always have one thing in common to bind 'em together—the memory of their defeat. Any they haven't any spoils of war to divide up and to fall out over and squabble about.

"But if we win—and we're going to win—there'll be quite considerable along the lines of captured territories and indemnities and commercial advantages to be parceled out and then, with so many different races in the victors' camp and speaking so many different tongues and having so many conflicting desires and jealousies, you're going to see a cat fight that'll last for years and maybe 'll lead to other wars.

"Since Cain killed his brother Abel, I reckon every war that ever was fought has had greed and envy—or, anyway, self-interest—for its underlying reasons.

Away down deep under any war you'll find—if you dig deep enough into motives—the old dollar mark hidden.

"Maybe that's not suitable doctrine to be preaching to a soldier or a citizen either, once the guns start popping. Just tell him his flag's been insulted and his country is in danger and that ought to be enough to satisfy any ordinary human being if he's got the right stuff in him—and the average human being has got the right stuff in him, I claim.

"Here's one war where we stand to lose a lot and don't stand to gain any material profits, but just crave to go on maintaining our national self-respect. I reckon no people ever took up arms in a juster or a finer cause, but all the same I hope we'll not forget when it's over that it's not altogether patriotism that brings on wars; that it's not invariably pure sentiment, pure love of country that's behind the diplomats and the politicians and the financiers.

"That's true, son, of this war; at least it's true so far as those European countries are concerned, and it's been true, as I just now said, of pretty much all the wars that ever were waged. Every pop there's been a nigger in the woodpile. And the nigger's other name is Moneybags."

"How about the war that you fought in, dad?" asked Morgan, evincing that instinct of his for getting at the bottom of things. "Wasn't that an instance where principle and nothing else divided the North and the South?"

"Well, let's see about that now," said his grandfather. "For a concrete case, let's take our own state and our own section. I'll bet you're like ninety-nine per cent of the young fellows of your generation; I'll bet you take it for granted that, with maybe a few exceptions, practically everybody around here who sided with the North was either a non-slave-owner or a confirmed Abolitionist or a poor white."

"Well, in a measure, yes," owned Morgan.

"I'm not blaming you. Listening to unreconstructed old Rebels, like your Uncle Gabe here"—he winked for accent to his joke—"you probably would get some such idea.

"But these are the facts, son, even if they haven't got into the history books: Back yonder in 1861—Lord, but sometimes that seems like centuries ago and yet right now it seems like only yesterday!—back yonder, then, Kentucky had more individual slave-owners than any southern state barring Virginia and Georgia.

"And the natural sympathies and sentiments of practically all those slave-owners were southern. Their antecedents and their connections and their habits were southern. And yet a whole lot of them fought for the North!"

"But if what you say is true, why should they have done that?" asked the puzzled Morgan.

"I'm coming to that: Of all the border states of the South, we had the longest stretch of territory facing and adjoining free soil. There was just the width of

a river between us and Indiana and Illinois and Ohio; and all along that river bank opposite us were stations of the Underground Railway—operated by folks who'd be glad to give a helping hand to any runaway darky that could get across.

"Now then, if conditions were like that when we still were in the Union, they were bound to be worse if the Confederacy won and established its northern boundaries at the Ohio, as it expected to do. Because, before war broke out, we were still, avowedly at least, all within the same government and presumably were being protected in our property rights by the same provisions of the Federal laws which applied to the country at large; whereas if the South won, we in Kentucky would have our entire flank opposed to the frontiers of another and probably a hostile country.

"That partly explains why so many of our leading people—older men and conservative men with thought of their pocketbook to stimulate their loyal impulses—held fast, at first enthusiastically and later with a more lukewarm spirit, to the Union, while the younger, more reckless men—in many instances the sons of those professed Unionists—went with the Confederacy, as I did, as your Uncle Gabe did. But after the slaves were freed, the situation changed and thousands of our people who on the surface had been for the Union, secretly or openly changed over to the southern cause.

"But of course then it was too late. But it wasn't too late for a lot of us to start building up the tradition that

all the best blood of Kentucky was on one side in that war and all the trash was on the other side. I reckon I've done my share of that, but as I get older I sometimes think I see things that are behind me in a clearer light than I saw 'em when I was a young man.

"Well, you're a young man yourself. Your job is to grab a gun and get into the mess and that's what you're fixing to do; and, with my palavering, I'm only holding you back from doing a lot of things that I reckon you're anxious to get cleaned up and off of your mind before you pull out.

"Run along now, son, about your business. It'll be America's business from now on. I'll probably be hanging around somewhere in the morning to see you off—if I don't forget it."

His tone was casual but his pride straightened his spine and expanded his chest as he turned under pretense of having duties to perform and, somewhat stiffly, moved off to another part of his plant; this conversation had taken part in the "office" of the Old Blockhouse distillery. His fellow-veteran tarried behind him for a little while.

"Boy," said Mr. Scarr, "whutever else you do after you git j'ined-up, don't let 'em stick you off somewheres in one of them mired-up trenches of theirs, same ez ef you was a ground-mole or a mushrat. That ain't no way to be treatin' a boy that has got one of Morgan's ker'nels fur a granddaddy and John Morgan hisself fur a namesake.

"You git 'straddle of a good hoss and you take a loaded six-shooter in each one of your hands—never mind about wearin' a fool sword or even a saber; swords is only fur showin'-off pupposes, and sabers ain't much better and never was, neither. You do like I'm a-tellin' you to, which that is the way we done it in our own day; and you jest sock your spurs into that there hoss and give the old Rebel yell and charge your men right spang over them Dutchmen and ride 'em down and they'll quit, see ef they don't."

"I'll try not to forget your advice," said Morgan, maintaining due gravity. "What's worrying me now is I'm going away just when it looks as though dad'll be needing me most—things so unsettled in this line and liable to be unsettled still more, yes, liable to be turned inside out, first thing anybody knows. If it weren't for dad, I could go shouting happy."

"Don't you fret none about that," said Mr. Scarr, consolingly. "I'll be right back of him, ever' move he makes. These here crazy teetotalers make a heap of fuss but they ain't never goin' to shove us plum' out of business—not *us*. You jest pike along to that there war and do like I'm tellin' you and you'll come back wearin' a gin'el's shoulder straps, shore."

* XXI *

A MARRIAGE TAKES PLACE OVERSEAS

MORGAN went along to that war, but shoulder straps of whatsoever variety managed to keep away from his shoulders. He was a corporal in a machine-gun outfit, going across on the transport in the late fall of that year; but about the time he painstakingly had mastered the rudiments of machine-gun fighting, they detached him from that branch and made him a sergeant and detailed him to clerical work at a way station on our Service of Supplies, and it was as a sergeant still and still doing clerical duty in a competent, methodical, unshowy, uncomplaining style, that he went, after the armistice, into Germany, on and up into the occupied territory beyond the Rhine.

He never did get into the fighting, for which privately he was regretful; never did reach any of the front lines until after they had quit being front lines. All through his term of enlistment right up to his hour for being mustered out, he performed, honestly and to the best of his ability, the task to which God and the military machine had set him. So he never brought home with him those shoulder straps.

But he did bring home a wife. Therefore he got his chance for happiness and a romance out of the experience, even if he missed the big thrills and the main excitement.

Romance for him originated in a small town between Brest and Nantes, a town where the A.E.F. had one of its biggest warehouses and where, for a season, worn-looking men in khaki checked stuff in and checked stuff out and tabulated requisitions and filled out forms and did that minute but monumental paper-work, that niggling, nagging, mountain-high paper-work, that tedious, picayunish, mastodonic paper-work, that puny, pigmyish, pachydermic paper-work which the Lords of Red Tape ordain to be essential to the carrying-on of a war.

Here, then, was where Supply Sergeant John Morgan Bird performed his monotonous share in this unending and unendable undertaking, and here in such odd hours as he had for himself, he fell in love and, having thus fallen, carried on his serene and uninterrupted love affair with one Mademoiselle Ernestine Michel, daughter of a notary of that village, and in her own right a deft-handed, quick-witted, compact little body, pretty but not strikingly pretty, frugal but not parsimonious, virtuous but not a prude, flirtatious until she gave her heart, and from then on stedfast and faithful to this big, quietly efficient, quietly masterful American of hers.

Arriving at his post, Morgan was billeted at the old

but stout daub-and-wattle-and-part-stone cottage of the Michels and, naturally, right away he met Ernestine. At first sight, the young man, being lonely and perhaps a bit homesick and discouraged, was drawn to the vivacious French girl, and she on better acquaintance seemed to like him.

Her widowed father, for whom she kept house, also came to like Bird, perhaps because Bird was so different from some of the flashier but less dependable noncoms who had previously been quartered upon them. Their placid, well-ordered homestead, projecting its angled front out into a winding road which was chalky when it wasn't miry—as it generally was, that road—seemed a million miles remote from gunfire; and yet, when you came to know its history, you knew that the war had dipped its greedy paw into this house and taken toll therefrom.

Of M'sieur Michel's three sons, one was dead on the field of battle near Verdun—literally so, since this son had been buried in an unmarked grave where he fell; and one was permanently a cripple by reason of his wounds, and the third was in a German prison camp at Cologne. After Morgan had learned these things and had observed with what simple fortitude the remaining Michels, father and daughter and lame invalided son, endured their sorrows and with what simple resolution they carried on the altered affairs of their lives, he developed a growing admiration for certain qualities of the race which had produced a family such as this.

Pretty soon he discovered that for Ernestine he was beginning to have something more and something deeper than admiration; was pleased to note that she returned his feelings.

In a way, the love-making which presently started up between these two was unique. Morgan knew perhaps fifty words of French, Ernestine knew about as many words of English, so while she was learning his mother tongue from him and he, under her tutelage, was expanding his French vocabulary, they had an interpreter, a sort of intermediary, in the person of an Acadian youth from Louisiana who, being disqualified for military service by reason of bad teeth and fallen arches, had gone over as a volunteer worker for the Knights of Columbus.

He bunked in the cottage just next door; was therefore frequently available for service as a go-between. And the patois of the Bayou country which he spoke was readily understandable to people of the peasant stock from which the Michels lately had sprung.

So night-times, before the wide hearth in the big tidy kitchen, he would sit patiently translating to Ernestine what Morgan said for her benefit and translating to Morgan what Ernestine said for his benefit, while Michel *père* and Michel *fils,* sitting side by side on a bench near by, smoked long villainous-smelling cheroots and jointly beamed their approval of these pleasant proceedings.

That, though, was carried on only for the first few

weeks; only until the couple could make themselves understandable to each other. At mastering a strange vernacular, Ernestine was much quicker than Morgan. Herein she was typical of her breed—characteristically swift to pick up new things but tenaciously slow to discard old things as done in the ordered and laborious way of her people.

Pretty soon the smiling young Cajun was saying that he wasn't needed any longer; that two made a company but three or more than three were a crowd, which latter idea he conveyed with sundry winks to Papa Michel and Paul, the son; and these twain, being persons who could take a hint or ignore it, as best suited their Gallic dispositions, chose, most obligingly, to take this one.

Thereafter the tall strong young man from the States, and the affectionate shrewd little reddish-haired French girl—she had Breton blood in her and it showed in her coloring—had more of themselves to themselves, which was highly agreeable to them and highly productive of progress in their small private drama. Morgan never before had had a real sweetheart; he was sure he never would have any other.

Having first made sure of himself, as he, being what he was, would surely do, and having made sure of Ernestine's sentiments—but that didn't take long, either—he dutifully wrote to Colonel Bird. In his letter he set forth with frankness just what manner of folks the Michels were, and told his grandfather he desired above all things to marry the French girl and bring her

with him when he returned following the end of the war and demobilization—for which contemplated steps on his part he asked his grandfather's consent and his blessing.

The marriage, he hoped, should take place as soon as might be after he had a reply to his letter; the end of the war and demobilization seemed still far off, for this was in the late summer of 1918. They came—or at least the end of the war came—much sooner than anybody at that time expected. But because mails were slow, even that far back behind the trenches, peace was distant but a few weeks when Morgan got an answer from Colonel Bird.

He wasn't in the village between Brest and Nantes when finally it did reach him. He had been sent on to Chaumont for work in one of the vast Headquarters depots there. It was raining hard on the day it reached him, after having been reforwarded from his former station; at Chaumont in late September it generally was raining.

He sat down in the muddy doorway of a muddy wooden barracks and opened the soiled envelope—somehow it also had become muddied in transit from the coast—and read what his grandfather had to say.

Colonel Bird had not dictated this letter; he had chosen to write it out, which perhaps accounted for its brevity. Once upon a time the colonel had been given to writing long and rather stilted letters. This one, for him, was quite short. The writing betrayed a

tremulous hand and a sputtering pen, but still and even so, there was a sort of wavering stateliness about the flowing old-fashioned script.

Of the letter's contents, the following paragraphs and a postscript were of particular significance for Morgan. The paragraphs followed one behind another on the first two pages of the four-page letter. They read like this:

> Your Uncle Gabe is dead. He was found dead in his bed last Tuesday morning, July 17th. He was staying here with me. I've had him here these last few months since he became so feeble, as I believe I wrote you previously.
>
> On last Tuesday morning he was late getting down to breakfast, which wasn't like him, he being always an early riser, as you will doubtless recall. So one of the servants was sent to arouse him and found him lifeless. He had passed away peacefully in his sleep—a good way to go.
>
> He left a cash property of upwards of nine thousand dollars, the fruits of his modest wages from me as saved by him all through those years and considerably more than anyone, myself included, suspected him of having. He also left a will; another surprise. By the terms of his will, the money goes to you in its entirety without restrictions of any sort.
>
> I was deeply touched by this proof of his devo-

tion to you and I know you will be. I was named as executor of his estate. The money is being held for you. It is in the bank drawing interest.

I shall miss him greatly. He was a gallant soldier, a loyal friend, a good Kentuckian. He left no close relatives. The interment took place on Thursday in our family burial plot here at Bird's Nest, with six of his former comrades—the only six besides myself in this county who still can get about—as pallbearers. Peace to his ashes!

Now, my dearly beloved son, I turn to a more cheerful subject, to wit: your engagement with Miss Ernestine Michel. I am sure you have not acted hastily; I am equally sure, knowing you, that you have acted wisely and in all regards honorably. The match has my entire approval, not despite the fact that your affianced, as you tell me, is of comparatively humble origin, but because of that very fact.

The best of the stocks that settled in America was the sturdy yeoman stock of Great Britain from which the Birds, like so many of our good southern families, have descended. I sometimes think the strain might be improved by the admixture of more of the blood of those who this past century have lived closer to the soil than some of us here have lived.

The differences in your respective religions do not concern me. Such things never matter when

two young people love each other dearly. What I say is that you are marrying each other, not each other's church. So I rejoice with you both in your new-found happiness. I send my affectionate greetings to the charming lady of your choice.

My chief regret is that I cannot personally be present at the union of your hearts and hands and lives; my chief hope is that I may be spared to welcome you and her upon your arrival on America's shores. However, I am sure that pleasure will be mine. Except that I am getting a trifle more rickety on my pins, my health continues excellent.

The postscript seemed to be an afterthought, as postscripts usually are. It read as follows:

While you are in foreign climes serving your country, your country appears to be determined to put you out of business. But pray do not be concerned. In any event, your present task is to keep on serving your country to the best of your ability, and you may rest assured that having, as I do have, confidence in the ultimate sanity of the American people, I guarantee that our honored industry will never be destroyed.

So young Morgan, who had the good will of his immediate superiors, got a leave and went back to Ernestine's village and there, one evening, the priest

of her parish performed the ceremony for them. Three days later, the soldier bridegroom, leaving his bride behind, was back at Chaumont and later on in the year was sent to Germany.

It was well on in the following year before he succeeded in getting his discharge papers; and in the meantime, on this side of the Atlantic Ocean, a great deal of water passed over wheels and ran under bridges and, by inference, got itself written into the Constitution of the United States.

* XXII *

SWAN SONG

ABOUT the time or shortly before the time young Morgan Bird over there in France was getting married, a meeting took place in the directors' room of the Old Packer Company, Inc. It was a conference on ways, means and emergencies. Representatives of a majority of the remaining independent distilleries in that part of the state were present, making up an assemblage of harassed-looking gentlemen. You might call them the Old Guard, the Last-Standers, the Bitter-Enders.

Watkins Packer, president of their association, presided; was suave and dignified, was outwardly unruffled but nevertheless much flurried in his mind. He must have been perturbed because it cost him so plainly visible an effort to avoid seeming perturbed.

Calling his conferees to order, he made a talk. Probably all within sound of his voice already knew the intent behind this gathering, notwithstanding which, and for the sake of regularity and the proper keeping of the minutes, he—craving the company's kindly indulgence—would outline it briefly: The fight against

the adoption of the Eighteenth Amendment having unfortunately been lost, the men of this industry were confronted, as some great statesman had said, with a condition and not with a theory.

Patriotically determined not to embarrass their government during hostilities, these men, of whom he was proud to be one, had for long months past exhibited rare qualities of patience under unstabilizing proscriptions and drastic curtailments. It was conceded that compounded and even more demoralizing limitations governing the manufacture and distribution of ardent spirits would shortly become effective.

Very well, so be it; what could not be cured must be endured. It equally was certain that the saloon, with its shortcomings, must go from this splendid America of ours and go forever. (Mild applause, in which quite a number did not join.)

But with intolerance rampant, with their fanatical enemies demanding not merely compulsory restrictions but actual abolishment of property and trade—abolishment, mind you—it would be suicidal to their private rights, their personal fortunes, their inherent liberties as tax-paying citizens of the republic, did these men continue to stand idly by or, what was almost as bad, to waste their energies on sporadic and individual protests, while marplots and bigots, busybodies and hypocrites destroyed them root and branch. (Louder applause.)

The principal question for consideration was whether

the affiliated operatives here convened should temporarily at least pool forces with the leaders of the trade generally, in the plan now afoot for exerting upon Congress all possible legitimate influences to the end that in its interpretation of this Eighteenth Amendment, the laws pursuantly enacted should be, not confiscatory, but instead, regulative and remedial.

Possibly he was overexaggerating the seriousness of that peril. It was inconceivable that the government would actually go so far as to undertake to legislate a great and reputable business entirely out of existence, or, in the final analysis, that the Supreme Court, that last bulwark of our freedom, would confirm so reactionary a thing. (Applause.)

Nevertheless, now and not later was the time for consolidated action, for offering a concerted front to the aggressions of their opponents. As all here were aware, the proposition had been advanced that a fund be raised by levying upon the several local manufacturers an assessment based *pro rata* upon their respective outputs. Also the suggestion had been advanced—and, he might add, had met with general favor—that the Honorable Buckingham Braydon, who was present in an advisory capacity, being a gentleman of wide experience in legislative matters, should be commissioned as their emissary and spokesman with authority to speak, to act, to consult.

Mr. Packer was convinced that such was the sense of this meeting. Before a vote was taken, though, the chair

would like to hear informally from a few leading members of this distinguished body. In closing, he desired to present, as the first speaker, one of the oldest men in the line—surely the oldest among those still actively engaged in making sour mash—one with a reputation for wisdom in counsel and straightforwardness in behavior, in short, their dean and their Nestor, that patriarch of the Bourbon country, that pioneer of the old régime, Colonel Attila Bird, of the Old Blockhouse Distillery. (More applause.)

Having, with this mixing of metaphors been introduced, Colonel Bird took the floor, or, to phrase it in a mold less parliamentary of tone, he somewhat slowly erected himself upon two rather shaky pins. He sucked in his cheeks until his horse-jawed aspect was accentuated. He looked about him, a sort of stern twinkling in his eyes, a sort of grim half-smile on his long seamed face, a sort of added bristle to his thick, snowy-white eyebrows, and then he began what was destined to be the last public or semi-public utterance he ever would deliver.

"I did not come here to make a speech," said Colonel Bird, without preamble. "But I did come here to say my say. I mean to say it and then leave, because I am convinced that very few of you—perhaps none at all—will care deeply for the general tenor of my remarks. For, gentlemen, what I shall say is in part a confession, in part an arraignment, in part an indictment; to which indictment I myself plead guilty in advance.

"All these years, because we disliked the ways of the rectifiers and the wholesalers, we've stood aloof from them, despising their synthetic products, scolding at their lack of ethics, contradicting their misleading claims, yelling for publicity for their formulas, arguing for laws which would force them to brand their goods for what they were and not for what they pretended they were. Now, when there's trouble on the horizon, you want to line up alongside that very bunch that we've always condemned and opposed.

"When we realize that the saloon is as good as gone, we say the saloon must go. But when we stood higher in the popular opinion than we seem to stand now, did we do anything to help correct the evils and the abuses and the miseries of the saloon system? We did not.

"When we saw dirty politics getting into the saloon and the saloon getting into dirty politics, did we lift our voices against the gang responsible for it? We did not.

"Privately we might hate the morals of that gang, but we just reared back on our haunches and watched 'em operate. We knew that whenever an infamous scoundrel bobbed up craving to open a disreputable barroom in a neighborhood where every hour he'd have to violate the law in order to last a month, there was a brewer ready to put up for his license, and a distiller on hand to guarantee that his rent would be paid."

A choleric voice interrupted: "We didn't do that sort of thing down here, colonel, and you know it."

"I'll tell you what we did do," answered the colonel. "We kept still while it was being done all around us. And how about these wide-open all-night grogshops and these filthy hole-in-the-wall barrel-houses—worse than the worst saloons—that have sprung up right here in our own towns? Did we make a move to put them out of business?

"As a class of men engaged in producing goods potentially dangerous, did we try to develop in our own ranks that spirit you'll find prevailing among drug dealers and manufacturers of high explosives and inflammatory chemicals? I say we did not—not as a class we didn't, and not often as individuals.

"First we sat by without lifting our voices or our hands while, year by year, the indecencies of the protected saloon traffic piled higher and higher. And then we continued to sit by and take our dividends, soothing ourselves and our consciences to sleep with hushaby lullabies, while there grew up this cyclone that's as good as swept the saloon off the map and threatens to sweep us into the discard along with it.

"We were like ostriches with our heads stuck in the sand—and you know what portion of an ostrich's anatomy stands up most prominently when he's got his head in the sand."

Another voice: "But we're only a small minority. Even here, the legitimate distillers are making only a fourth of the alleged whisky that goes out of the state."

"In reply to the gentleman who just spoke, I'll state

that a cowardly minority which keeps still merely because it happens to be a minority—and cowardly—is giving encouragement to any majority that happens to be crooked. And if it comes to that, I'm not sure that all of us could show clean hands.

"Gentlemen, you must pardon me if my language seems harshly abrupt. Excuse it, please, on the ground that a testy old codger, a moss-backed and antiquated dodo is singing what probably is his swan song to a senile tune of his own composing. Let me add this: I've been in this business since before most of you were born, but it's only here recently, so it seems to me, that I got my eyes open to some significant things regarding which I've heretofore been blind—yes, not only blind but deaf and dumb as well.

"I'm not regretting that I've spent my life making likker. I'm proud of it, because it was good likker—stuff to put cheer into men's souls and strength into their bodies—but, gentlemen, I've finally reached a conclusion. I've reached the conclusion that whisky—even the sort of whisky I make—is a mighty bad thing for some people."

He paused a moment to let that sink in and then tailed on the snapper to his joke:

"Yes, suhs, I repeat it: a bad thing for some people—and a dam' sight too good for a lot of the others! A dam' sight too good for the Pharisee who sets himself up, by his own authority, as his brother's keeper. A dam' sight too good for the fanatic who just natu-

rally craves, without rhyme or reason, to take all the joy out of life so that everybody else will be as miserable as he is. A dam' sight too good for the two-faced pretender who votes to keep his neighbor from taking a nip but intends to go on taking all the nips he pleases. [Applause.]

"Hold on, though: There are some folks different from these who're behind this Prohibition issue; don't overlook them. There's the fellow who's a teetotaler from honest principle There's the fellow who thinks Prohibition means temperance, which I maintain it does not.

"There's the man in the street and the woman in the home who, in their inarticulate hate for the rottenness of the corner groggery, are ready to tear down, if they can, the whole institution of which we're a part, the good along with the bad, the high-grade beverage along with the doctored-up and fabricated stuff. You've got to reckon with them, and there must be a good many millions of them—if ballot-box returns prove anything at all.

"Well, they've proved one other thing lately. They've proved that we are in the middle of a mighty bad fix. And so, when things begin to look sort of desperate for us, you're willing to join in with the identical crowd that we've always professed to despise. You're ready to help maintain at high expenses a paid lobby, are ready to pitch your dollars into a slush bucket in the hope that, at the eleventh hour, we may be saved from the

consequences of our own criminal neglect, our own blind folly, our own selfish isolation through all these fat and profitable years that lie behind us."

"I rise to a point of order," broke in a fuming gentleman. But he didn't rise; he fairly bounced up, inflated and taut with the gases of his indignation. "Am I to understand from that, that you decline, suh, to join your associates in this proposed undertaking for the defense of our civil and industrial rights?"

"You are not," Colonel Bird calmly reassured him. "I've merely been stating my views. I shall now state my position:

"I shall contribute my proper share to this fund of yours," he went on, and probably none there knew how at that the veteran inwardly winced on committing himself to further serious inroads upon his diminished and straitened finances. "The money, my allotted share of it, shall be ready whenever your committee may call upon me for it. I may not altogether indorse the means to be employed but I do indorse the object in view.

"Like the rest of you, I'm fighting for my rights and fighting for common sense, and I'm using such weapons as seem available. But, gentlemen, in this connection let me make one final thing clear: I do not see how we can be ruined by the attacks which threaten us. In fact I am morally sure we will not be ruined. We should be aroused but we need not get panicky.

"They'll never be able to put us clear out of business—never be able to lock our doors in our own faces.

They'll be stopped before they get that far. They can't do that thing to us—not to us they can't, gentlemen.

"Suhs, I shall not, by my remarks, further retard your deliberations and your proceedings. I concur in what you do; I'm with you, world without end. Suhs, I bid you good day."

And on that somewhat paradoxical wind-up, Colonel Bird took his black slouch hat in one hand and his cane in the other and stumped out of the conference room, leaving it seething and murmuring behind his squared old shoulders and his defiant old backbone.

He was out of their hearing now and a babble of voices arose:

"Not the time to be saying such incendiary and—*hum*—misleading things, even behind closed doors."

"You're right, major, absolutely right. Why, if this harangue of his got out, it'd be just the same as so much ammunition for the Antis."

"Still"—this from an oldster in a tone of begrudging admiration—"still, you must admit he's got the courage of his convictions."

"Convictions! Just a doddering old false alarm—that's what I'll maintain till the cows come home. Just a tall tree that's gone dead at the top."

"Well, there're excuses for him at that. We've got to remember those old bygone troubles of his; they must still prey on him sometimes. And besides, he's been up against it for ready cash here lately. That's common report, as you-all know. Carrying on his busi-

ness that haphazard way, and buying wildcat stocks that went sour on him and trying to run his place like a barony, and so forth."

"Packer should have shut him off before he got started. What have we got a presiding officer for?" Uttered in a discreet undertone, this was.

"Handed out the real stuff at the finish, though, didn't he—stuff with the right ring to it?"

"You said a mouthful, then, major." This was Mr. Buckingham Braydon, projecting his personality into the symposium. "He may 'a' jammed in a pile of false doctrine—anyhow, back-number issues that nobody wants to listen to 'em and that oughtn't to be said—but that there old fossil certainly hit the nail on the head at the last when he said they couldn't never in this world outlaw you gentlemen right spang out of business.

"Still and even so, you can't jest set back and let this mess straighten itself out. You got to jump in, jest like he says, and hit a power of hard licks for yourselves. That's what I been preachin' to you ever since you called me in.

"And if you want me to run on up to Washington and use my connections, you'd better let the powwowin' slide and do something definite about it before this here meetin' is half an hour older. Because I'm a busy man these days, gentlemen."

✱ XXIII ✱

DEMON RUM IS BURIED

MR. BRAYDON was indeed a busy man these days; had irons in various fires; had subagents in various camps; owned, under cover, a couple of influential country newspapers; trafficked with sundry smart local leaders here and there; saw to it that no untoward legislative mishap befell the Pari-Mutuel Club; privily was laying plans for an alliance—should certain contingencies develop—with that up-and-coming statesman, the Honorable B. Gill Simcox.

Yet at this particular moment the aims of these two would, to the casual eye, seem most widely divergent. It is the wise man who looks ahead while covering up the tracks he leaves behind him.

According to agreement, Mr. Braydon was provided with the sinews of war and went to Washington where, without making any unnecessary noise about it, he labored expertly and prodigiously—a latter-day King Canute bidding the onrushing tide retire. He was one of numerous Canutes.

Right up to the eve of the taking of the decisive vote, the specialist continued to send back encouraging re-

ports to his principals in the Blue Grass, and no matter how gloomy the prospect or how imminent seemed complete defeat, the essence of his song was embodied in those heartening oft-chanted words: They can't do that to us!

It was inexplicable, in view of developments, but nevertheless it was the truth, that Mr. Braydon's beleaguered clients believed it. They were of the Dynasty of the Die-Hards, a species which grows rarer. They kept on believing it, some of them, even after the last warning, even after the dire decisive blow fell.

There was, for a conspicuous instance, Mr. Watkins Packer of the Old Packer plant. Trusting that the Supreme Court would rectify a state of affairs which by his standards was absolutely intolerable and not at all to be borne, Mr. Watkins failed to withdraw from his bonded warehouses an adequate supply of his delectable product for personal and family use during a protracted dry spell, in case it should prove a protracted dry spell.

Thus and lamentably it came to pass, when his own doors had been sealed in his flabbergasted face, that for the curing of a chronic and cultivated thirst he had to irrigate with medical aid—a suddenly prosperous country quack charging him three dollars for each and every prescription, no matter in whose name issued, and the druggist in turn charging him three dollars more to fill the said prescription, which, as you can plainly see, brought the total cost of the transaction up

to six dollars per prescription or per one commercial pint of indifferent liquor, the words being in this case interchangeable.

But, even while he cursed over this repetitious outrage, Mr. Watkins Packer, with a firm but foolish orthodoxy, continued to declare: They can't do this to us.

They can't do this to us! It had been a refrain and a slogan and a shibboleth. It had been a watchword and a catchword, a rallying cry and a war cry. It would in turn and in time become a death rattle, a funeral dirge, a requiem, an obituary note, an epitaph, an echo from beyond the grave.

They can't do that to us!

To say this here, though, is to anticipate by a few paragraphs the logical and the chronological order of the narrative. Various things, outwardly in no wise correlated, but all, as you must see, having a bearing upon the shifting of old channel-buoys and the uprooting of old landmarks, kept multiplying in the section where these scenes have been laid.

Gus Leopold, head of Leopold's Beau Ideal Gents' Furnishing Goods Emporium, told a person who once proudly had called himself a drummer but now, as his calling card proclaimed, was traveling district sales manager for Sonntagg & Sternberg, fashionable hatters of New York, Paris, London and Waterbury, Connecticut, that he guessed this fall they'd better cut down the regular standing order on slouch hats, to,

say, just about two dozen, assorted sizes—one dozen of the black ones and one dozen of the white ones—and shoot along instead a good big stock of them snappy up-to-date curly-brimmed Alpine blocks in the favored shades, such as tan, chocolate-brown and pearl-gray.

The General Peak farm was sold by the heirs to an amateur thoroughbred fancier who had made his nest-egg millions out of Oklahoma oil and had increased them on the New York Stock Exchange. It was the last sizable stock farm in the county to be divorced from its tribal ownership; the one which had remained in the hands of its founder's family after all the rest passed to rich Easterners or Westerners. The new proprietor promptly sacrificed the rambling log-and-frame nondescript of a house where the rubicund, fox-hunting, toddy-drinking brigadier had been born and had lived out his span and had died, and on a hilltop some distance farther back from the new concrete transcontinental highway which passed the place, he broke ground for a white marble palace modeled along the general lines of something his present but third wife had seen abroad. A whole grove of tall rusty-barked hickories and walnuts had to come tumbling down to make room for the palace and for the terraces and gardens that were to be grouped around it and for the formal approaches that were to lead up to it.

The pack of limber-eared hounds that had survived their master was dispersed—the old dogs humanely

poisoned, the pups given away, the rickety kennels torn down. The present wife would go in for chows.

The county veterans of Morgan's Command held what they reluctantly agreed would be their last annual reunion, five infirm and crumbly relics being present, including a relic on crutches and a relic in a wheel chair.

Another sun-bright and glittering service station designed like a Swiss chalet was contracted for, to stand on the razed site of Galloway's unsightly and unsanitary old wagon yard, so the house flies and the horseflies and the loafers and the rats had to find fresh roosting grounds. There was still one decrepit livery stable left though, and likewise one blacksmith shop hanging on by the skin of its teeth down there back of the L. & N. station somewhere.

The Rotary Club started its series of popular Tuesday luncheons at the new Hotel Ritz-Carlton on Main Street, where the long-since demolished old Mansion House used to be. A Kiwanis Club was organized also.

As a personal tribute to the newly elected state president of the W.N.P.L. (Women's National Prohibition League), who was a brilliant and gifted citizeness of the community, the local chapter put on a county-wide membership drive which netted more than five hundred names.

Morgan Bird, bringing his little French wife with him, arrived months after most of the other World War veterans returned, which delay was due to his

protracted service in Germany; and while Morgan was devoting his plodding, heavy-footed talents to the job of trying to untangle as best he could the snarled-up affairs of Bird & Son, little Mrs. Morgan devoted hers to the much easier job of making her grandfather-in-law enthusiastically and extravagantly fond of her.

The Volstead Act became an accomplished fact, and they laid Demon Rum in his grave.

✱ XXIV ✱

A LITTLE MISSIONARY WORK

YES, sirs, while large employees of labor applauded and believers in miracles rejoiced and gave thanks for the overnight regeneration of a race, the Volstead Act became an accomplished fact; and one result of this was that quite a number who had been drunk right along began, much against their wills, to be sober, and quite a number who had been sober right along began, with a hearty good will, to be drunk.

Another result, circumscribingly speaking, was as follows: That distinguished native son, the Honorable B. Gill Simcox, no less, saw a great light and after making public profession of the dewy faith that was in him, climbed aboard the band-wagon or water-cart and, having appealed for support by all lovers of law and righteousness regardless of party affiliations, came out as a non-partisan candidate for governor on a platform of Strict Enforcement; and by certain devoted factions was thereafter affectionately hailed as the Red Lion of the Knobs and by other factions derisively was dubbed Bone-dry Simmy. But of the former order there were decidedly more than there

were of the latter order, as subsequent events would attest.

And another result was that Colonel Attila Bird went over to Danville to see his sister, Mrs. Juanita Ringo. For a partial summary of yet other results, consult the press of the time. Or, back files not being available, see, for progressive developments, daily papers. See today's paper. Or yesterday's. Or tomorrow's.

The colonel's trip was made by motor. It was made in a car which Morgan borrowed from an accommodating friend and which Morgan himself drove. There was no car at Bird's Nest yet.

To begin with, the colonel was one of the few men in the community who still went abroad in a buggy—he didn't ride horseback any more. In the second place, since he insisted, with the implacable obstinacy of the aged, in keeping house on the same lavish scale of former years—plenty of servants about and, to little Mrs. Morgan's secret sorrow, an overabundance of food on the table—Morgan felt that the household could not afford a car just at present.

With his wife rendering competent aid in that direction, he was doing his best to cut down the expenses here and there. They had to train and pare discreetly, though; it grievously annoyed the old man to encounter evidences of any curtailment in the budget. He would chafe under it and turn crotchety, and then Ernestine must exercise her best wiles of diplomacy to win him back into good humor again.

She always could do it, though. He liked to have her about him; liked to hear her call him "*dad-dee*" in her funny French way; would put aside his paper or his book to follow her with his eyes as she moved, with her quick birdlike movements, about the room. But you should have been there to see him stamp his foot down on it when she wanted to sell the surplus garden truck.

So, there being now a modern hard-surfaced highway clear on through to Danville, Morgan got a car from a friend down the road and took his grandfather overland. Word had come to the colonel that his sister craved to see him. She wrote in a splayed and quivering hand, the penciled lines running uphill and down the sheet, that latterly she had fallen into a low and peevish state. Her bodily infirmities, which were manifold, she could bear, but her mental state gave her concern.

She feared—so she wrote—that this for her might mean the final break-up. At eighty-three one could not disregard such warnings. She had not sent for the doctor. Practically all through her active life, excepting only that time seven years before when her eyesight began to fail, she had been able to dispense with the coddlings of physicians and she did not propose at this late day to start calling them in. But she did desire to consult with her dear brother.

Almost to the point of estrangement they had differed—in fact still differed—in their views regarding intoxicants; but after all they were brother and sister

and they both were so old now and she yearned to see him again. Perhaps he, who had been so robust of body and, for his years, so active, might advise her regarding her health.

Concluding, she rather dwelt upon the harassments which here recently had fretted her. She couldn't exactly call them symptoms but she would call them manifestations. Somewhat at length she described these plaguing manifestations.

Reading her fretful descriptions, Colonel Bird smiled to himself. Still wearing that cryptic smile, he went about his preparations for the trip. Next morning he and Morgan set out on their cross-country jaunt from their edge of the Blue Grass district clear on through almost to the farther edge.

The older man stood the journey remarkably well, all things considered. He appeared to enjoy it. Of recent months he had stayed rather closely at home; and, even to his old eyes, the land in mid-April was good to look upon, what with the dogwood and the redbud all out and the wild plums on the ridges just coming out, and the wild violets blooming; and the blue grass fairly jumping out of the ground.

He was shocked, though, when a middle-aged negress, who filled a sort of combination rôle as nurse and companion for Mrs. Ringo, ushered him into the bedroom of the invalid. In the intervening three years since he had seen her, a grievous change had taken place in his sister; he instantly was aware of that.

On the occasion of their last meeting she still bore herself well erect, and despite her purblind condition was able with the aid of a cane to walk fairly well; was able also, with secretarial assistance, to carry on her duties as state president of the W. L. N. P. She had been its president and its most indomitable worker from the time of the founding of the state branch.

It was last year that she had resigned the reins of office, retiring in favor of Mrs. Hawthorne C. Grady, that same blameless Christian lady and lifelong devotee to the Cause, in whose honor and for commemoration of whose unanimous election so successful a membership drive had been staged in Mrs. Grady's bailiwick and the colonel's.

But Mrs. Ringo was bedfast now, had that look about her—dropsical, shapeless aspect of body, peaked and wasted aspect of face—which frequently characterizes old persons who suddenly grow feeble. Her once formidable jaws had sagged weakly and fallen in; her once strong hands were shriveled and shrunken, and tremulous; and the now worn-out useless eyes which had so often, and with such defiance, looked brightly into his, were covered with a shade.

Her voice, when she spoke at sound of his footsteps on the threshold, carried a ghostly trace of the ancient strength. It proved that within the shell some shreds of the dauntless spirit of old lingered on.

"Is that you, Attila?" she asked. "Well, come on in and say howdy to me." Inwardly deeply distressed but

maintaining a cheerful front, the colonel crossed to where she was propped high against thick pillows and bent and kissed her. Her cheek, to his lips, had the taste of a musty parchment, of a scrap of old sheepskin.

By token of that kiss was buried the ancient discord between them. On his part it was a symbol and on hers it was an earnest, not of surrender, but of harmony. They were both too old to quarrel about anything.

"Attila," she said gratefully, "it was good of you to drop everything so promptly and come all the way here just on my account."

"Not much for me to drop, sis, what with the plant shut down and son looking after such odds and ends as are left of the business to be looked after." The colonel spoke almost gaily; it was perhaps just as well for the peace of mind of both of them that her affliction barred her from reading the look on his face while he said it.

"Yes, sis, I'm largely living a life of ease these times, thanks to—*hem*—various reasons. So I was mighty glad to get your letter asking me over but mighty sorry to hear you've not been feeling as peart as you did a while back."

"It was a comfort to be able to write you," she answered. "Of course I can't see the words after I've set them down, but by using a pencil I can sort of feel them out. . . . Attila, I'm very unhappy. I'm so restless, so nervous. I'm half distracted.

"See how my hands shake; they didn't use to shake

that way. And I've no appetite any longer. My appetite always was good, even after I was tied here to my room and couldn't get outdoors any more. It was remarkably good until just here lately.

"And my mind—I suppose it's a reflex of my physical condition—but I'm so morbid, so low in my mind. I can't seem to lift this depression that's descended on me. Having somebody talk to me, or somebody read to me, doesn't help as it once did.

"Once I was fond of company. Now I hardly see anyone at all. Somehow I don't seem to want to see anyone. But there, I told you all that in my letter." The voice had shrunk to a petulant wail. "I did want to see you, though, Attila."

"And I wanted to see you," he said heartily. "As soon as I read what you wrote, I had a sort of idea as to what it really was that ailed you and I decided to come right over and see if I couldn't help you. I've brought the cure along with me."

"Medicine won't do me any good, if that's what you mean," she complained querulously. "I've been taking Vinula for years and years—you remember how I would bring a bottle along with me when I paid you a visit in the old days? I took a wineglassful before each meal and another wineglassful before retiring. It was a wonderful tonic. It kept me cheered up, made me eat well, made me sleep well. Why, I used up a large bottle of it every three days. I literally couldn't get along without it. I still take it."

"So I note," said the colonel, somewhat grimly, with a side glance at a gaudily labeled bottle standing on a table alongside the bed.

"Yes, I take it regularly," went on the invalid. "But Attila, Vinula seems to have lost its power to help me. I crave it—it's got to be a habit with me—I even take larger doses of it than I ever did before, but the uplift, the strength is all gone out of it, somehow. All I do afterwards is just lie here and suffer.

"And as I wrote you, I'm fearful that since Vinula has lost its power to sustain me, it must mean I'm wearing out fast. I wouldn't send for a doctor—I've always tried to stand consistently by my principles, as you know, and I never did believe much in doctors—but I wanted you.

"I felt somehow that maybe you might help me. Instinctively I seemed to turn toward you. But I'm afraid I'm past being helped by any medicine." She sighed dispiritedly. "Oh, I'm so worthless, so no-'count, as we used to say, Attila, when we were children."

"Well now, you just wait a minute and see," he declared. He turned to the silent grave negress. "I see you've got ice water here," he said, "and glasses and a spoon. But I need a little sugar to mix this dose with —lump sugar, if you have it, or if not, granulated sugar."

"We's got de powdered kind downstairs," said the attendant.

"That'll do, then. Get me some, please."

The colored woman hurried away. The colonel drew a chair alongside the bed and sat down.

"So your old stand-by doesn't seem to have the old reliable kick in it any more?" he said musingly, almost dreamily.

"No, it doesn't."

"You used to buy it by the case, as I recall—two dozen full-size bottles to a case."

"I still do. But these last few cases—all the strength appears to be gone out of them."

"Let's see, now, isn't it the same stuff that's manufactured by that big patent-medicine man down in Georgia or Alabama—the one that's so prominent in church work and so strong for foreign missions?"

"Yes, that's the one. He's still alive, I think."

"Yes, I'm sure he is. Seems to me I was reading, not so far back, where he'd endowed some pet theological seminary of his with a couple of million more and passed out a few hundred thousands to convert the heathen. He got mighty rich making this Vinula, I reckon."

"Oh, yes, he must have. But Attila, he earned every cent of it. He has been such a benefactor to his kind. He helped millions of people in this country. I used to see the testimonials in the paper. They poured in from just everywhere. And when I was active and got around more, ever so many people I knew took it regularly. Ladies particularly. It's a blood balm, as well as a tonic, you know."

"Yes," said the colonel dryly, "so I observe by the language on the label of this bottle you've got here. Big advertiser, that Vinula man has always been. I wouldn't be surprised, though, but what his sales are beginning to show a falling off lately. I wouldn't be surprised to hear he'd taken up some other line—cancer cure, say, or consumption cure or pneumonia cure."

"No wonder he's branching out, if Vinula is losing its efficiency with others as it is with me. But surely that can't be the fault of Vinula. It must be that I'm failing." She tossed her head despairingly.

"We'll see about that," replied Colonel Bird soothingly. "Oh, there you are," he continued. The negro woman was back with the sugar. "Give it to me—thank you. Now would you mind leaving us alone here—my sister and myself, for a little while? I've some private matters to discuss with her. And please close the door going out.

"Oh, yes, you might tell my son, the gentleman that I left downstairs in the parlor, that I'm confident his Great-aunt Juanita will be feeling so much better in a few minutes that he'll be able to come upstairs and have a nice little visit with her. I'll come out to the hall and call down when I want him—or you.

"Now, sis, just one minute more," he said, as the latch clicked behind the withdrawing witness.

So soon he was fumbling at his hip; was fetching forth a flat flask filled with a russety-reddish liquid.

He shook this flask briskly, causing its contents to

bead freely, and next he was busy making sugar-and-water sirup in the bottom of a tumbler; and next, carefully measuring with his eye, and being deft and precise about it, was emptying into another tumbler just so much of the bright fluid and diluting it with the sugar sirup which he poured in upon it, and next was stirring all together with a spoon, whistling gently between his teeth the while. The colonel, at seventy-nine, still had some of his teeth.

"Now, sis"—he was putting the glass to Mrs. Ringo's lips—"there you are. Don't sniff at it; don't sip it. To humor me, just swallow it right down and I'll guarantee results. The-ere you are; you took it to the last drop. Tasted pretty fair, didn't it?"

"Yes, it did," admitted the invalid. She smacked her lips on the after-flavor of the draft.

"And didn't smell so bad, either?"

"No, the odor was distinctly pleasant, distinctly appetizing—with just a faint suggestion of something I've smelled before somewhere. What is it, Attila, that you've given me?"

"Wait a minute longer for the reactions before I tell you." Saying nothing further, he stood smiling down at her for a little space. Then, from her, in a revived tone, came this:

"Why, Attila, it's heartened me up already! I distinctly feel a sort of warm comforting glow—a sort of nice soothing tingle inside me. You must tell me what that stuff is."

"I'm going to now. I was just holding back until your system was fortified against the shock."

"The shock? What in the world do you mean?"

"Juanita Bird Ringo, I mean just this"—and the colonel, speaking rapidly, was jubilant and yet somehow, at the same time, pitying—"I mean that, after having been comfortably and uninterruptedly tight for a considerable number of years and uncomfortably sober for a considerable number of weeks or months, you've just had the first dram of decent red likker that you ever drank in your whole life."

"What!"

It was in part a startled and scandalized bleat, in part a strangled gasp, in part an outraged, incredulous outcry.

"It's a fact, Juanita." He was striving hard to be moderate in his triumph, not altogether succeeding, though. "What you've just put into that yearning and famished stomach of yours was a Bourbon toddy and, if I do say it myself, a pretty tolerable good one."

"How dare you?"

"It being the first one, I made it fairly stiff—you needed it stiff. The next one needn't be quite so strong. I'll give your darky woman the right proportions."

"Attila Bird, what have you done to me?" she protested in a wan sort of panic. But unless he was mistaken, the protest already was tempered with resignation, the panic would be short-lived.

"Juanita, I've merely improved considerably on what

you've been doing to yourself. Listen, my dear"—and now he was taking her two fluttering hands in both of his. "It wasn't your fault—in your ignorance you were as innocent as the babe unborn—but the facts appear to be that, without knowing it, without even suspecting it, you have developed, since you began to grow old, into what I'd call a first-class tippler on third-class likker. But I've known it for quite a spell.

"Wait a minute," he went on hurriedly, seeing that she was struggling to find words. "Don't get needlessly excited. Let me ask you a question or two: You didn't write any of those testimonials yourself, did you? You didn't even go around proclaiming to the world that you are an addict—I mean that you took your little swig of this precious Vinula about ever so often, did you?"

"No, I—I didn't," she faltered. "I thought, being opposed to doctors, that it might seem inconsistent for me to admit that I was taking a so-called proprietary cure-all. I—I made a sort of secret of it."

"Ah-hah! And after these nostrums and these panaceas, these tonics and blood balms began putting the truth, or part of it anyhow, on their labels—of course they didn't care much for that; the revised Pure Food law made 'em do it—you never read on a Vinula bottle the little line in fine type, 'Contains forty-two percent of alcohol by volume' or words to that effect, did you, Juanita?"

"If I had, if only I had! Oh. Attila, you know how

it was with me—my poor weak eyes and all. I gave up trying to read newspapers even. I was absorbed only in the Cause."

"And it followed, then, that you didn't read where one of these muckraking magazines exposed the Vinula man and got him in a hole with some of his religious brethren—is that so?"

"Not a breath of that ever reached me, Attila," she pleaded. "I swear it."

"I'm sure of it. I understand how it was with you, sis. I've understood all along how it was with you. That's how I could figure out why you'd felt so downhearted lately. I knew that since your outfit put over this Volstead Act on my outfit, that pious party had to cut the bad booze out of his Vinula or else run the chance of getting in real trouble.

"As it was, I gather he had a close call from being churched by his denomination. It wasn't until he coughed up for the heathen that he got his vote of confidence—and then the vote was close. . . . So far as your particular case was concerned, you've merely been shot with your own gun, Juanita, that's all."

"But if you knew all this long before now, why didn't you warn me? Why didn't you tell me, in confidence? You let me go on leading a double life. You let my habits give the lie to my lifelong principles! Oh, Attila, why—if what you say is true and I'm afraid after this terrible revelation that it must be true—why did you do that to me?"

"That's kind of a hard question for me to answer," he confessed. "Maybe I thought it best to mind my own business. Maybe I realized that at your age you needed stimulants about once in so often—even the sort of stimulant you were getting. Maybe I was sort of malicious and wanted to have my little private joke on my sister.

"But that's all past and done with. You've had what the boys call a hang-over and I've cured it for you—cured it in one dose. You do feel revived a whole heap, don't you?"

She didn't speak, but submissively she nodded in sign of abdication to forces more powerful than she.

"You're going to keep on feeling better. And you're going to keep on keeping your secret, too. Before your friends, the Prohibition crowd, closed in on me and put me out of my own plant, I did show a little sense—more sense anyhow than that smart Alex of a Wat Packer, for one, showed—I saved out enough prime Old Blockhouse to last me and my guests and my friends for the rest of my natural life.

"I've got it tucked away all over the house. I've got it buried in the ground outside the house. There's plenty for me and there's plenty for you, sis.

"As a matter of fact, I stuck a couple of cases of eighteen-year-old goods in that car before we started over, and covered it up with a lap-robe—moving likker without a permit, you have to do that now. Even in Kentucky you have to. Those cases are for you.

"For a steady but fairly moderate imbiber, such as you, they ought to last a good while. But should you find your stock running low, I'll find a way, or my son will, to smuggle you over a fresh supply. And nobody around here, except you and your servants—I reckon you can trust them—need ever be the wiser for it."

"To think that at my age I should be conniving, even passively, at transgressing—yes, breaking the laws! To think that for my sins I must compromise with my conscience!"

"Not your sins, sis. Don't say that. Just look at it this way: You need a little likker regularly, having been accustomed to it for quite a spell back, and I'm going to see that you get it. It's not too late, even after long acquaintance with Vinula, for you to develop a discriminating palate for good likker—and Bird & Son never made any other kind, as I've told you many a time before now."

He stooped and kissed her again.

"Now, now, now, honey, don't give way," he bade her, seeing that she was on the verge of tears; and she was eighty-three and he was almost eighty, and never before had he seen her weep. "Everything's all right, sis. Everything's going to be all right from now on, even if old Mr. Vinula did fail you in your hour of need.

"In a little while I judge maybe you'll be ready for another light toddy. You having been shut off this way so long, you'll need another soon. It's getting on toward

my own regular drink-time, too. I don't know but what I might join you in a social nip. We'll take one together, eh?"

"Just as you say, Attila," she consented. "I put myself in your hands; you seem to know what's best. But oh"—she was plaintive about it—"but oh, Attila, why need you put it that way—speaking of a social nip between us? It makes me feel such a traitor to what I've always advocated—the movement I dedicated my whole life to! And now to be like this and to have to own up to it before you, of all persons! I'm ashamed, Attila, I'm ashamed!" For a flash, the old crusading fire flamed in her: "But Attila, whisky must be a bad thing for some people."

"Exactly my own words, as addressed to a somewhat different company not so very long ago," he said. "You're quite right, Juanita. Whisky is a bad thing for some people, and a—a blame' sight too good for some of the others, as I also remember having remarked on that occasion. But not too good for the Birds. Not too good for a couple of members of a family that has been turning out honest red likker ever since Hec was a pup!"

She spoke her next words reluctantly and yet eagerly: "Attila, how long did you say it would be before I could have another one of those—those toddy-things?"

✱ XXV ✱

THE COLONEL GROWS OLDER

WHEN old Colonel Bird of Bird's Nest boasted to old Mrs. Ringo of Danville that forethoughtedly he had laid by an abundance of his own brand, he reckoned, as the fancy writers say, without his host. He bragged too soon. Being absolutely correct about it, he bragged too late.

While he prolonged his stay in Danville—he remained over there the second day—a culminating onslaught was being carried on against his precious store. The pilfering had been going on for months past; that distressing fact would be disclosed on investigation.

Six cases already were gone out of his attic, ten cases out of his cellar, fifteen or twenty cases more from his brick smokehouse. Now the confederated rogues took advantage of the colonel's temporary absence to execute their biggest stroke yet.

They knew where his subterranean caches of barreled goods were. The ringleader in the conspiracy had helped to bury the liquor. This was one Nelse Hawkins, the son of that trustworthy black servitor David, now long since deceased.

Up to a certain point the enterprise moved smoothly. Guided and led by this Nelse, the embezzlers followed a routine which heretofore had worked most admirably. At three A.M., the night being moonless and black, they disinterred two soil-smeared barrels from their respective hiding-places—one from behind the raspberry bushes in the garden, the second from beneath the turnip-salad patch.

They replaced the loose earth and loaded their spoils aboard a spring wagon and set out for the rendezvous on the outskirts of town where the cargo was to be delivered over for spot cash to the buyers, these last being dependable w'ite gen'lemen with whom the six jubilating plotters had aforetime repeatedly dealt after a fashion satisfactory to all concerned.

This time, though, the operation miscarried. Near to the spot appointed, the expedition fell into an ambuscade. Not friendly genial purchasers, but divers cold-voiced, dimly seen persons all of a sudden surrounded the span and wagon and the doomed occupants of the wagon.

"Tumble out of there, you darkies, and line up in the road here in pairs." That was an order coming out of the encompassing gloom. "And hold mighty still while you're being coupled-up without you want to get your nappy heads peeled." That was the next order from the spokesman for the reception committee.

"First coon that makes a break or starts any monkey business, is goin' to wake up on the other side of

Jordan tomorrow mornin' shot full of holes. There's an automatic pointin' at every last one of you right now. Got those cuffs ready, Brophy? . . . All right, niggers, watch your step."

For many besides the shackled captives, marching townward two by two, disappointments grew out of this disaster. Prominent among the victims you must list their white affiliates, already dispersed and in flight.

These persons had counted heavily on this major consignment of eighteen-year-old stuff. Properly "cut" and treated, those two barrels would have yielded ten barrelfuls at least; and the market was certain; the patrons eagerly awaiting their bespoken allotments of the diluted but still delectable goods.

Now, for solace and the assuaging of their appetites, the patrons must turn to Jamaica ginger—that was before the government stepped in, and while this heavily charged compound was available at the nearest drugstore; or else they must turn to the colorless potable known generally among the trade as "white mule." And "Jake" set fire to your throat and made you crazy, made you permanently crazy sometimes; and "mule" caused burning in the stomach and would knock you down and stomp on you.

So you see that, excluding Colonel Bird from the equation, there were ramifications of the debacle affecting many bereft individuals in many parts.

However, you cannot exclude the colonel from the equation of it, inasmuch as it did have a bearing upon

sundry phases of his subsequent course of action. He and Morgan, driving home in their borrowed car, were greeted, on arrival, with the bad news.

The two male members of their household staff, both being persons previously held in high regard, lay in the county jail along with four hitherto respected negroes of the neighborhood; and the colonel's priceless barrels of sour mash were safely in custody of the law. Since the seized liquor belonged to him, he might eventually and by complying with certain rigmarolish and involved formalities, reclaim it.

The colonel stubbornly declined to do any such thing. Not even though it meant the ransoming of his own impounded property and its return to him, would he acknowledge the propriety and the validity of legal processes that were part and parcel of a statute with which avowedly he was out of sympathy. He would take his medicine, he said, and he stuck to it.

From this position Morgan could not stir him, nor could Morgan's wife. Where these two failed it would have been useless for any third person to intervene with persuasion. Nor would he move to prosecute the trapped culprits.

He brooded over the affair, though. If during the succeeding months he said it once to Morgan, he said it a dozen times:

"Son, it's not so much the loss of the likker, although that's something, too. It's the thought that my own darkies—Dave's son, that had been on this place since

he was born, and Pink, that had worked here for years and years—would do a thing like that to me. Why, I'd have trusted either one of them with my loose change or my pocketbook or practically anything I owned."

"It wasn't altogether their fault," Morgan would answer. "You still could trust either one of them with your loose change. But dad, this temptation was too big for them—what with those white men shoving rolls of bills in their faces, coming to them and offering them what looked to them like fortunes." To himself the pestered Morgan was adding: "Yes, offering what would look like a fortune to me just at present."

"You've said that before," Colonel Bird would rejoin irritably. "I suppose you're right, but still I can't help from worrying over it. I'm glad old Dave is dead and gone. You couldn't have hired *him* to betray me—not with a million dollars, you couldn't."

"The times are out of joint now, dad."

"Lord knows they are, son. And I'm too old, I reckon, to readjust myself to them. Well, anyhow, Juanita's fixed with what she'll need during the little time she'll be here on earth—that's one consolation, sort of. And I've still got a few bottles left.

"Blame it all, boy, here I sit, talking of having a few bottles left when in those two bonded warehouses yonder is plenty of our own whisky and yet I'm not able to walk back there and get a single drop of it out for my own use. Well"—and here he would indulge in a

mournful little chuckle at his own expense—"well, when those few bottles are gone, I reckin I can fall back on prescriptions, just like Wat Packer had to do."

The prospect of falling back on prescriptions already was giving young Morgan concern. This prescription thing was a costly thing. Certain of the doctors in town and certain of the drugstore proprietors, working together in a mutual understanding and by such understanding growing affluent together, made it costly. Whether your physician issued the prescription in your name or in the name of one of his stock-patients—Jones or Smith or Robinson or whomsoever—his fee for the service was mandatory and standardized.

The drugstore man, in his loyalty to the fixed tariff, was adamant, too. And a pint wouldn't last Colonel Bird long, not longer than a day and a half or, by stretching, perhaps two days.

Money was none too plentiful around Bird's Nest either. The mortgage on the distillery, and it out of commission, ate up a lot of money. It ate up the lion's share of the proceeds of sales of stock on hand as rationed out under government withdrawal permits for medicinal use and so on.

And there were all those other accumulated debts to be reckoned with; and the household expenses, which somehow kept mounting up and mounting up in spite of all Morgan's wife could do to economize. The revenue from acreage under tillage had been cut down mighty low, too, what with crop failures from time to

time and sluggish demands for farm products and the high cost of farm labor.

In fact, farm labor at any price was a rare commodity. It was small wonder then that Morgan was worried. It perhaps was less to be wondered at that his grandfather moped and brooded for hours and days on a stretch.

Along about this time, the grandfather began getting queer crotchets in his head. He had had his share of tribulations and grief; perhaps more than his share of both. But never until now had he been morose, nor until now had he shunned miscellaneous company. With age his voice had thinned and sharpened and turned to a piping treble but until now had never been whiny or quavering.

Still and all, there was this much anyhow to be said for him. He might be rusting out but he'd not rot out. You saw in him a gentle deterioration but no degeneration. You saw none of that suggestion of a moldy and unwholesome decaying from within which often marks the very old.

Still, if you were with him, you began to notice altered things about him. Once he was a gadabout; these times he rarely left the place. He gave up going to church, he who had been regularity itself in his attendance at St. George's. He resigned as vestryman. He had few callers, so many of the men of his generation and his mode of thought being dead.

He grew impatient if visitors tarried too long and

yet after they were gone complained that they did not come often enough; that their visits were too far apart. He said he felt like an outcast, the way his old friends were treating him.

He didn't read much any more. He preferred that Ernestine should read to him though she stumbled sometimes over unfamiliar English words.

Hearing her tell about her childhood and girlhood in France seemed to entertain him mildly. He made her repeat certain stories over and over again.

In one outstanding respect he had not changed. He still was fussy about his wardrobe; still liked the feel and look of starchy linen and highly polished footgear.

Presently the other dwellers in the house observed that he had quit going near the shut-down distillery. He avoided that part of the estate where it stood. By preference, when the weather permitted, he sat in an armchair on the front porch so that he faced the road and had behind him and out of his sight the plant and the creek on beyond, where the majority of his former work people lived, most of them on ground which he had sold them upon easy terms and in small houses which they themselves owned.

The straggling settlement was smaller now than formerly, so many having moved away lately. About every third cottage was boarded up.

* XXVI *

A CALLER ON BUSINESS

THERE came a time—it came in the latter part of the following year—when the octogenarian spent an even greater part of his waking hours indoors or out on the porch. That was after he had his stroke and could move only by dragging his deadened left leg with little scuffling, scraping sounds, and scarcely could use his left hand at all because of the palsy that was in it; and his face had a twist to it by reason of that afflicted drooping of the left eye and that stiff wooden-looking loll at the left corner of his mouth.

But before that—to transport you back into a more orderly and processional sequence—he had his experience with the foreign potentate.

Morgan came walking out from town late one evening, having gone in to see a somewhat impatient creditor, and found his grandfather awaiting him, all swollen up with a great choler. Morgan couldn't remember when he had seen him so angry as he was now.

"Son," he demanded, "who is this infernal, cheeky, diamond-studded dago that calls himself by an unpronounceable name and claims to be in some sort of

bottling business down by the river somewhere and drives about in a gold-mounted chariot of a touring car?"

"You must mean Nickie the Greek—that's what they call him," said Morgan, secretly uneasy. "He's been around here for a couple of years now, off and on."

"What gives him the right to come walking in here as though he owned the place and demanding to see you right away?"

"I reckon he wanted to see me on business."

"So he intimated before I conveyed to him the information that I was not interested, and told him that I was engaged for the moment, and, with such politeness as I could command, suggested that he might call again at a more suitable time. He departed then, leaving this room all stunk up with garlic and hair-oil.

"But I was interested. I am interested to know what dealings you possibly can have with that greasy person. Well," he went on testily, as Morgan delayed his answer, "well, would you mind admitting me into the secret?"

"Well, dad, to tell you the truth, I've lately been selling him the empties that we have left on hand after the gaugers drew off the likker for bottling. At least there's no law yet against my doing that."

"All of them?"

"All of them."

"He indicated that he thought he had a claim of some sort. And do you, by any chance, know what does he do

with all those empty barrels of ours after you sell them to him?"

"Yes, I do, dad, but I hoped to keep you from finding out, knowing how you feel. He scrapes off the sediment from the inside and renders down the char by some process or other—extracts what's in it. I mean. I think he even grinds up the staves and the heads. They'd be pretty well saturated, you know; the pores of the oak soaked clear through in the case of a barrel that had stayed in bond a good while."

"And then what?" The colonel was making a merciless cross-examiner. "And then what, pray?"

"Well, I'm not exactly in his confidence but—oh, you must know, dad; you know what's going on all over this district—he takes that mess of soppy sawdust and chips and all and uses it to color and flavor mule so he can pass it off for Bourbon."

"So he can pass it off for Old Blockhouse—is that what you mean?"

"I'm—afraid so."

"And what does he pay you for those barrels?" demanded the colonel.

"Up to sixteen dollars apiece, depending on the condition. In the days before Prohibition we only got about a dollar and a half apiece, as you'll remember. Now I'd say we average around twelve dollars. He has paid me as high as sixteen for one lot. And, dad, that money comes in pretty handy—we can use it."

"Morgan," said the colonel—and Morgan scarcely

could recall when the colonel had called him by his middle name—"Morgan Bird, we have no use—Bird & Son have no use for money derived that way."

"But, dad, practically everybody's doing the same thing. If we don't sell him somebody else will."

"Let 'em. He'll traffic no more with our good name. Before that ignominy is visited upon the reputation of Bird & Son, those empties shall be chopped up and burned for firewood on that grate yonder. If we're headed for the poorhouse let's go there like gentlemen. Do you understand?"

"Yes, dad, I understand," said Morgan, "and it's all right. From today, I'll cut off Nick's supply so far as we are concerned."

So the family income suffered curtailment in that direction. And for days Colonel Bird was out of temper with Morgan, for days on end nursed his grudge, fanning the embers of it when they smoldered down; and that wasn't like him, either. He had been a great hand to flare up, but in the old times these outbursts were short-lived and usually in an hour or two he would be laughing at himself for his lack of self-control.

His stroke came in October, in the week before Hallowe'en, and the week after his sister Mrs. Ringo died. He hadn't been equal to driving over to Danville for the funeral; hadn't felt up to stirring about at all; had complained for days of a dizziness when he straightened up suddenly and of a swimming before his eyes.

Strangely enough, after the attack he appeared to be in some regards stronger than he was before. He rallied quickly. The doctors agreed that it was remarkable a man of his age should make even a partial recovery.

Except for that fixed skew in the left side of his face and the shaking hand and the affected leg, which gave him a lingering, clumpy gait like a string-haltered horse, he seemed quite himself again, hobbling out on the porch upon fair days and declining to let Ernestine or Morgan give him an arm, barring when he was getting up from his chair or getting down in it. He needed help there; and Ernestine had to help him when it came to knotting his cravats and putting the big flat gold studs in his shirts and at such small things.

He was, for him, very silent, very much absorbed apparently in his own private thoughts. He wasn't even greatly interested in that year's gubernatorial campaign, which grew hot in the summer and hotter still in the autumn and reached its sizzling climax at the polls on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

He seemed to take the whole thing as a matter of course; actually fell asleep in his armchair while Morgan on election night was getting the final returns over the telephone from the newspaper office in town. And when Colonel Bird refused to be stirred by a close political fight, that was indeed a sign of something.

It had been a whale of a fight, too.

★ XXVII ★

MAINLY ABOUT POLITICS

ONE whale of a knock-down-and-drag-out fight it was. And when it ended the Honorable B. Gill Simcox was governor-elect.

But he knew he had been to a horse race, no doubt about that. By a narrow margin he lost his home county. The Knob precincts out where he had been born stood loyally by him, but the town went against him, and the richer sections lying about the town on three sides went against him likewise. He lost most of the other Blue Grass counties; by that same token, lost the larger cities—Louisville, Lexington, Covington, and the rest of them.

It was the tremendous strength he got in the back districts—up in the mountains and along the rivers—that put his candidacy over. In those remoter parts, party lines broke down and were wiped out. Republican strongholds deserted the Republican nominee and went hell-bent for the Red Lion.

For once, Democratic strongholds gave majorities for an independent. It was a hard blow for the professional prognosticators, that verdict which was rendered

at the polls with the rural voters coming up like an army with banners and the ruralists' votes whirling down like autumn leaves.

Well, what preceded it was a wearing time upon the forecasters and the prophets. It was in various ways a different kind of campaign; that is to say, differing from other campaigns for the governorship.

Preachers turned politicians, country preachers, mainly. They preached a veritable holy war—a jehad of the homespun people, the common people, the plain people, the Christian people.

For the most part these evangelistic partizans stayed away from the barbecues and the "rallies" and the "mass meetings," but they thundered from their pulpits, and beneath "brush arbors" in the groves along side roads they wrestled mightily—with words—before the Lord. They prayed in the home and offered counsel at the market-place. Afterwards it was conceded that except for the unbought help from this quarter, the glorious victory would not have been so glorious—indeed, might not have been a victory at all.

Nor was the grateful winner behindhand in returning thanks to another most invaluable ally—namely, Mrs. Hawthorne C. Grady, state president of the W.N.P.L. With her lovely strong voice and her indomitable energy and her masterful, majestic, full-busted, broad-bosomed personality—a great platform presence, everybody agreed—she rallied the women to the Cause.

She turned her sistren from straying and uncertain ewe-lambs into fighting cohorts. She accompanied Candidate Simcox on his principal speaking tours, which labor took her into every corner of the state.

Sometimes she followed him on the stump, sometimes preceded him. In company they spoke every day and for weeks on end; often spoke two or three or four times a day, and between speeches traveled over indifferent roads from place to place.

The strain of it all told heavily upon him. More than once he had to cancel appointments and go into temporary retirement while close friends and his physician attended him, and on election night, when enough returns had been tabulated to guarantee his election, he vanished altogether and was in complete seclusion at his home for forty-eight hours, suffering, so the doctor reported, from a partial collapse induced by overwork.

But from the beginning to the end, Mrs. Grady never missed a date, never disappointed an audience, never failed to score decisively before that audience. She spoke as one inspired, Prohibition for her text, enforcement and a yet stricter enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act for her pleadings and her pledges.

She was at her best, was more effective, though, when giving her leader a clean bill of health, moral health and political health. With her plump but shapely white hands clasped upon that part of her torso which a knowledge of anatomy would predicate as being near-

est her heart, with her glasses trembling emotionally upon the bridge of a well-modeled nose, with a sincerity which no fair-minded person might doubt, she proclaimed her faith and her trust in the integrity, the right living, and the honesty of the man.

Were they not citizens of the same county? Had she not known him almost since childhood? Had she not marked his rise from humble surroundings to his present proud eminence? She had, she had, oh yes, she had!

Her very appearance was by thousands accepted as a complete refutation of the slanderous innuendoes which some of his detractors in the frightened camps of the opposition circulated, and of the attacks against his private character as against his public record also, which more courageous vilifiers openly voiced. Verily, the lady was as a column of smoke by day, a pillar of fire by night. She just naturally knocked 'em cold.

From all this, though, you should not take it that the Red Lion of the Knobs lacked for practical political advice while his growing battalions pressed ever onward through the soft autumnal days and the war-painted season of Indian summer. Valiant amateurs at this intricate game might be heading the volunteers but a seasoned veteran sat with the board of strategy, his practiced hands on secret wires which reached out to secret forces in court-houses and city halls and back offices. It wasn't like Buckingham Braydon to keep himself in the background when a spirited campaign was on, but in this campaign he did do just that.

For his espousal of the rôle of the modest violet which shrinks, there was a reason. As he put it to Mrs. Grady shortly after he took over the management of what might be called the inner and more intimate organization of the Simcox Non-Partizan Alliance, there was a most excellent reason.

"You see, Mizz Grady, it's like this," he said. "Account of my havin' been tied up in a business way with the old distillin' crowd here not so many years back—but strictly in a business way, because, between you and me, my heart never was in it—there's probably a lot of evil-minded scoundrels that'd be jest low-down enough to try to bring that up against our man ef I was too prominent in this mix-up.

"You know how some people are—they won't give a man credit for changin' his mind conscientious; they'll keep right on makin' out like he must 'a' had a selfish motive for switchin' round. So it might hurt B. Gill—God bless him!—ef I, tryin' in my humble way to help him run this fight, was to show myself before the people any more'n I can help doin'.

"And you know without my tellin' you, Mizz Grady, that I'd cut off my right hand before I'd do anything to cripple him or damage the great big beautiful ideal he stands for. So while you're goin' ahead with your job of linin' up the fair sect and the preachers are goin' ahead with their job of linin' up the religious element, I'll jest stay back behind the breastworks and do my level best—which may not be much but still and all,

it'll be the best I can do—to sift a little old-fashioned, hoss-rack, livery-stable gumption and political common sense into the thing.

"And when it's all over, you-all can take the credit and the glory. Lord knows you'll have earned it. His own private feelin's will be reward enough for old Buck Braydon."

His humility was most touching, and she told him so in so many words.

Having passed his promise, Mr. Braydon kept it. Right through to the glorious outcome he maintained the self-effacing rôle or, as he, in his homely way stated, he kept hisself under kiver. He might be striving by day and by night, but few persons saw him striving or heard him—or smelled him, even.

Nor did he press his claims for public recognition after triumph had been achieved. That, he insisted, was for the ministers and for Mrs. Grady and her outfit—especially for Mrs. Grady.

So therefore it befell, with the election six or seven weeks behind them, that the happy Mrs. Grady continued still to share the limelight with the proven choice of the people. For instance, on the great occasion of his installation into office at the beginning of the New Year, she would have a preeminent place among the invited notables on the platform in the state-house grounds at Frankfort; by his own request would stand on the inaugurated one's right hand for proof of his gratitude to her and her allies, and for validation of his

unswerving and uncompromisable intent to carry the victorious standard of Law and Order Without Fear or Favor, on and on through his administration to yet greater heights.

Moreover, on Friday night of Christmas week—that would be Friday night of this coming week—she was to preside here in her home-town and his over a monster popular demonstration—so the local papers spoke of it—for ratifying and celebrating and commemorating the recent achievement. The governor-elect would make the principal address, as was befitting, but she would preside and she would introduce him.

By contrast with Mrs. Grady, and she all so pleasantly palpitant, so bountifully surcharged with her memorized eloquence, so entirely convinced that this was the most satisfactory of all possible worlds, there was, to keep the comparison local, old Colonel Bird, who had let the campaign pass almost unnoted and unnoticed by him. From his lips no one had heard mention of the fact that the next governor was by way of being his blood kinsman—many degrees removed, to be sure, but nevertheless a kinsman.

In fact, no one had heard him mention the winner's name at all. It was as though he had so little interest in the man and his mounting fortunes that it did not occur to him to speak of him. It was as though those inner speculations of his which kept him silent and brooding for long hours on end, engaged his mind altogether and completely.

* XXVIII *

PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT

THOSE inner speculations were badly geared, clashing thoughts which ground around and around getting nowhere and only making things jangled and interwoven and increasingly confusing. They were grinding away in Colonel Bird's tired old brain on a bleak afternoon when the Reverend Philo Janney drove into the place to see him.

Since eating dinner the invalid had been huddled in a big armchair before the fire in his living-room. There would be stretches when he watched the hickory chunks burning on the hearth bricks and stretches when he leaned back, his head bent sidewise, and looked through the front windows and saw the limbs of his shade trees clashing together as the wind smote them and stripped them of their few lingering leaves.

The sky was full of snow threats but no snow had fallen as yet. If it came it would be the first snow of the season. Snow or no snow, this was the first real bite of winter. It was rough weather, all right, and getting colder and more blustery by the minute.

It might mean a white Christmas, a phenomenon for

this latitude. Christmas was only a few days off. What with the temperature dropping so fast, it also might mean a freezing-up of the creeks weeks ahead of the midwinter period when this was likely to happen.

Some winters the creeks did not freeze over at all; films of brittle ice forming close to shore perhaps, but open water in the middle. However, the wiseacres had predicted an early winter and a hard winter this year. From today's signs, it looked as though they might be right about it. Here it was, only half past two o'clock and already the far corners of the room were getting dark.

The Reverend Philo Janney drove up in his mud-spattered car and got out and knocked at the front door. After a wait, his knock was answered by a pert-looking negro girl in a short skirt and pink satin slippers with high heels which turned under her when she walked. She had bright patches of rouge on her brown cheeks. There were no male house-servants at Bird's Nest now; there had been none since Nelse and Pink went to jail that time.

The caller was starting to state the purpose of his call, or rather to state who it was he desired to call upon, when through the living-room's half-opened door the colonel's cracked but far-carrying voice reached their ears.

"Flora, if it's somebody to see me, ask whoever it is to come right on in here. Don't be keeping anybody out there in that chilly hall."

So the Reverend Mr. Janney surrendered his hat and overcoat to Flora, who seemed in some doubt as to what she ought to do with them, and accepted the invitation. Where he stood for a moment in the doorway, Colonel Bird, peering from under two bushy white eyebrows, looked him over and recognized him and, all in a flashing space, appraised him. The colonel's eyesight was still remarkably good, his hearing likewise.

He noted the narrow brows, the narrow tight lips, the narrow mirthless unimpeachable face, and to himself he said that here was a young man who in olden times in Scotland would have made a good witch-pricker, who in other olden times in Spain would have made a hard-working and devoted searcher-out of heretics for the Inquisition, who in these present times must be very responsive indeed to the calling he followed. To himself he said that, but aloud he was saying with courtesy:

"How do you do, suh. You will pardon me for not rising; I have an infirmity. Please be seated."

Perhaps it was characteristic of the newcomer that he should choose the hardest and stiffest chair in the room and that, instead of sitting back in it, he should poise on it rather in the posture of a cormorant that is prepared to pounce. But before doing this he crossed the room and shook hands with the colonel, saying in a voice reminiscent of country pulpits:

"You probably don't remember me, suh. The name is Janney—Philo Janney, originally a minister of the

gospel by profession. We only met once and that was during the great World War—during the First Liberty Loan drive. We both spoke from the same platform at a patriotic meeting in Georgetown. That was before I gave up my charge—I had a church near Tarr's Gap. I gave that up to engage in this new avocation of mine. Possibly you know what that avocation is?"

"I do, suh." A flitting suggestion of a smile gave to the colonel's twisted face an added twist so that it was like a face reflected in a badly flawed mirror. "I placed you, too, suh, the moment I got a good look at you—before you spoke. And naturally, as a citizen of this county, I am more or less familiar with your—*hem*—activities in this county."

"Such being the case, possibly I'm not very welcome, dropping in on you unexpectedly this way. Maybe I'd better explain what brings me and then possibly—"

The other checked him to silence with a gesture of his good hand.

"Don't misunderstand me, Mr. Janney. I'm sure you are here on what you regard as a proper mission. Such small hospitality as this house can offer is yours while you are a guest under its roof. And permit me to add this: On this issue which somehow or other has become a main issue in this country, you and I are on opposite sides of the fence.

"There's no doubting that in many respects we always were on opposite sides of the fence from each

other. But I endeavor to have respect for any gentleman's views even though I may regard them as absolutely erroneous views, provided only I think he entertains them in good faith. And I have no reason and no right to question your good faith.

"By hearsay I know you must have your share of stamina. In a period of our local affairs when bribery and grafting and double-dealing appear, if I may say so, to be somewhat prevalent, not to say rampant, I have heard no suspicions concerning your integrity.

"From what I gather, there is no stink of corruption on the hem of your garments." With a soft graciousness he tacked on the stinger: "I wonder whether you don't feel lonesome sometimes."

"I try to do my duty as I see it, as it is shown to me." This, rendered patronizingly, was in the nature of a pontifical announcement.

"Granted, suh."

"I made material sacrifices—abandoned the career to which I had been called—in order to carry on this new work. I look upon it as an obligation laid on me as a Christian—as a cross I must bear if I mean to win a crown."

"I'm sure of it. I get your drift. I hope you get mine. Kindly proceed."

"Well, Colonel Bird, I came here today to see you—alone."

"You came at an opportune hour. My son is in Lexington. He went over this morning on business and has

not yet returned. I don't expect him back much before suppertime. His wife went along with him; she wanted to do a little Christmas shopping.

"It so happens that except for a couple of darkies you find me alone in the house. You might shut that door behind you, though, if you wish to insure absolute privacy."

The enforcement agent went and after a quick glance out into the empty hall closed the door tightly. Then, as he returned and reperched himself on his chair bolt upright, he proceeded:

"What I have to say to you, colonel, is in the strictest confidence. On your word of honor as a gentleman it must remain for the time being a secret between us."

"That, suh, is understood in advance," answered Colonel Bird with a stiffening and distant politeness. "Your manner—if you'll permit me to say so—is mysterious. I am waiting to hear you further."

The ex-preacher's close-set eyes were all at once aflame. He had the tense inspired manner upon him of a true zealot—a zealot who speeds a sharp bolt.

"Colonel Bird," he said, "what would you say if I were to tell you that a grave crime is being contemplated—in fact, is about to be committed—not only against the government of the United States but against you individually—against your possessions?"

"I'd have to say I was not greatly astonished," replied the sick man; and the other's rapt face fell that the colonel should manifest so little of surprise. "Be-

cause, suh, when you appear in your official capacity, as is now evident, and when you mention my possessions you can mean only such of my possessions as pertain to my late activities as a distiller of Bourbon whisky.

"Tell me, Mr. Janney, if you don't mind, is it a simple and convenient matter of forged withdrawal orders such as they unearthed last month at the Old Bronough plant across the line from us in Woodford? Or is it merely a case of fixing somebody, so the boys can siphon off some barrels and then fill 'em up with spring water, as was done the month before that at Major Yandall's in Nelson County?

"On second thought, though, you'd hardly expect me to be shocked by the prospect of such a common little trick as that being worked here, even though I am the chosen victim. It has occurred too often, hasn't it?"

The Puritan disregarded the irony. Perhaps he was unaware of any ironic intent.

"It partakes in a way of the nature of the latter offense," he explained. "But organized on a much larger scale—a very much larger scale. Let me tell you the whole story and then I'll guarantee you'll be stirred up in earnest. Colonel Bird, tonight at nine o'clock, at least ten men and perhaps more will be down in the cellar of your large warehouse."

"Number Two, you mean. Well, ten men or even a dozen wouldn't crowd it uncomfortably. It's rather a

roomy cellar. Even so, how will they get into the cellar without exciting the interest of the guards who are stationed there by the Federal authorities?—or at least so I'm reliably informed. I haven't been down there lately myself."

"I regret to have to inform you that the watchmen—both shifts—have been tampered with. They'll see nothing, hear nothing out of the ordinary; they'll probably be off the premises on some pretext. Besides, these ten or perhaps twelve men that I have just spoken of will not enter the cellar by way of the warehouse itself. They'll get under the floor without even going inside the building. Can you guess how?"

"By digging in?"

"No, suh, guess again."

Now, quite briskly, the octogenarian's white head was wagging.

"I reckon I get you," he said. "The old sewer pipe that runs up from the hollow by the creek—the drain that used to carry off clean refuse before I moved my auxiliary stills to their present location and enlarged the old building and converted it into a warehouse—that's what you mean, isn't it?"

"Exactly."

"But years and years ago that drain was blocked up at its lower mouth."

"It has been opened up; it has been cleared out. And it's big enough for a man to crawl through it and get into the cellar. It will be big enough for a whole squad

of men to crawl through it, one at a time, tonight at nine o'clock."

"And then what?"

"Why, they'll use that same sewer pipe to carry off your whisky. They'll all have augers, braces and bits. They'll scatter through your cellar, going to spots where marks to guide them have already been put chalked on the undersides of the floor timbers.

"Each man will bore up through the planking and through a stave of a full barrel that's lying on its side just above. He'll stick in a nipple that's attached to a flexible rubber hose and hold it there until that barrel is sucked empty—until its contents have been drawn down through the hose into the entrance to the drain. Then he'll go to another marked spot and repeat the same operation.

"With that many men busy, with that many separate coils of piping in use simultaneously, you can figure for yourself how many hundreds of gallons of whisky will run through that sewer between nine o'clock tonight and broad daylight tomorrow morning—if nothing happens to interfere.

"This gang figure that none of it will be wasted, either, or very little. There may be some small spillage in the cellar but there'll be none where it streams out under the creek bank. Because there'll be other men there, standing by to catch the flow in casks and barrels and take those barrels away by truck or wagon as rapidly as they fill.

"The whole scheme has been worked out most carefully. Those men—there are sixteen in all actively concerned in the plot—are already counting up their profits. Their plans for disposing of it were made weeks ago.

"There will be just one drawback, Colonel Bird, to the complete success of this scheme. Right in the midst of the job, just about the time when they're in full swing and after they've manufactured enough physical evidence against themselves to convict every last one of them—they'll be nabbed red-handed.

"I'm looking after that detail; I've made my preparations while they've been making theirs. And of the men involved, fifteen of them will go to prison, where they belong.

"As surely as there is a Hereafter, Colonel Bird, those fifteen men will serve time in stripes for violating the law of the land and the law of the state and the Constitution of the United States—the law of God, too." For this exalted and exultant moment the good young man's tone was that of the exhorter at camp meetings. "And I—praise His Holy name—I am to be the chosen instrument for their undoing and their punishment!"

"You are to be congratulated, suh," said Colonel Bird, and his words carried just the merest trace of a dry and bland sarcasm. "Your devotion to the cause you serve deserves reward. It can't be though that you expect me to hand it over to you.

"In fact I'm sure, listening to you, that you have no such notion in your head. If I'm one to judge, you look on this—this prospect of jailing this crowd—as reward enough.

"Pardon my denseness, Mr. Janney; I'm old and lately I haven't been well, and I reckon I must be breaking up pretty fast. Might I ask you to clear up for me one point in your most thrilling disclosures?

"Five minutes ago you mentioned sixteen men, but now you say fifteen men will rot in prison. According to my arithmetic that leaves one of these depraved malefactors unaccounted for. Have they actually got a traitor in their midst?"

"One man got weak-kneed. He says his conscience rebuked him, says his conscience gave him no peace from the moment he committed himself to this undertaking. A week ago he came to me and revealed the whole plot. He informed me freely of every detail of it. It was a complete confession.

"In return he asked for pledges of immunity—naturally, he asked for that much. If the authorities see fit to pay him anything, that is their concern and not mine.

"I insisted that to avoid any suspicions on the part of his confederates, he should continue right on through to pretend to do his share. When the time comes, he will testify against them. He of course will not be prosecuted. I promised him that. He is very penitent for his transgression. At every opportunity he has told me so."

"You set me to thinking along a new line. Perhaps in my own dim way I can fathom the motives which took him to you. But, Mr. Janney, why, on the eve of springing your trap—why should you come to me?"

"Well, colonel, primarily it's your property that's to be stolen."

"Technically, and in a way of speaking, my property although actually not in my custody or under my control."

"Precisely. And if there should be any hullabaloo while the arrests are being made—there might be some shooting; you never can tell—I'd hate to think that you or the other members of your household might be needlessly alarmed, and especially a man of your age. That's a second reason."

"Thank you. I shall endeavor not to become overly excited. It has been a long time since I heard shots fired in anger. Any third reason that you can think of, Mr. Janney?"

For the first time during this interview the visitor fumbled under prompting; for the first time seemed reluctant to speak up and speak out. But his hesitation was short-lived. The Reverend Mr. Janney was a truthful man, a literal man, a God-fearing man. He walked in dread and trembling of his particular God.

"Hum," he was clearing his throat. *"Whoosh!"* temporizingly he was blowing his nose; then was blurting it:

"Yes, colonel, there's another reason: There has

unfortunately been more or less friction—I might add, jealousy—between members of the local enforcement forces and some of the Federal authorities. They have not always worked well together. Disputes as to jurisdiction—they have cropped up from time to time. And I regret to have to say that even among those specially chosen to enforce the splendid new law there are some I cannot regard as being absolutely trustworthy. Leaks have occurred. And so forth. And so on."

"Didn't you take a chance on a leak when you came to me and revealed this plot?"

"I did not. I got your word of honor beforehand."

The colonel's smile was wry. But then his mouth already had that wry droop to it. "You have me there, suh," he confessed. "But go on, please. You hadn't finished what you were saying."

"So, in view of conditions and after prayerful consideration—believe me, I have not acted hastily or ill-advisedly—I decided to effect this wholesale capture without calling on the Federal people, without giving them any hint as to what was afoot. I have sworn in my own posse of special deputies—resolute, determined Christian men, none of them being citizens of this vicinity.

"At the proper moment my posse, acting on signal from me—I take the responsibility and of course I shall share the danger, if any such there may be—these men will close in on the gang and overpower them. But inasmuch as I am engineering this thing single-handedly,

so to speak, it is only a human impulse that I should ask that credit for it be bestowed where credit is due.

"I felt that some reliable witness should be in position afterwards to give testimony that I, and I alone, had all the facts in my possession prior to the seizure. You had a personal concern in the matter, so naturally my choice fell on you."

"As you say, naturally it falls on me. I should feel complimented. . . . Well, Mr. Janney, was that all?"

"But, colonel, you haven't even asked who these rascals are!"

"Perhaps I am not particularly interested in that detail, Mr. Janney."

"You should be. You know them, or most of them."

"Oh, do I? Well, formerly I had a fairly wide acquaintance in this county."

"It comes closer home to you than that, colonel. Some of them—a majority of them—have worked for you, or their fathers before them did. Most of them are neighbors of yours; others have been until lately."

"What's that you say?" The old man's slackened shape was straightening, his bad hand was fluttering on the arm of his chair.

"Some of your old employees—they're in this thing up to their necks. I have here a list of the names of all of the culprits. The names of the principal ringleaders are underscored." He was taking a folded slip of paper from his pocket. "Would you care to see that list, colonel? It'll open your eyes.

"One of the names is that of a former foreman of yours. Another, unless I'm mistaken, is that of the ne'er-do-well son of an old and close friend of yours, now deceased. He is one of the outsiders, so to speak. The rest mostly belong in this immediate vicinity."

"Give me that paper." It was uttered as a command, not as a request.

Colonel Bird read what was typewritten on the single sheet—read it and reread, then leaned back, the paper quivering in his fingers, and shut his eyes.

"First my own black boys go to jail for robbing me." He said it musingly and in a thin undertone, and he must have been addressing the cracked ceiling, since his face was turned that way. "Now my own white boys—the ones that I raised up, that I loaned money to, so they could have homes of their own, that drew their wages from me during all these years—they're fixing, these same boys and their boys, to rob me and go to jail for it, too."

"I beg your pardon, colonel. I didn't quite catch that?"

"You must forgive me. Mr. Janney," said the colonel, opening his eyes. He returned the paper. "I was merely indulging in a prerogative of the old and the debilitated—I was just kind of muttering to myself. It's a symptom of disintegration, they say—thinking out loud is. Please indulge me further. Let me think out loud some more." His manner became reanimated.

"I'm thinking back on other times and I'm thinking

forward to these times. I'm thinking that between us, Mr. Janney—between the way my crowd muddled this game when we were on top and the way your crowd have gone about curing the world of what seems to ail it since you got on top—well, between us, Mr. Janney, we've just naturally played hell with this country, haven't we?"

Shocked by the profanity as well as by the sentiment expressed, the enforcement agent arose and shortly thereafter found his hat and overcoat and took his departure. Immediately he was gone, the paralytic struggled up to his feet and, propped on his cane, he bestirred himself in the empty forepart of the antiquated, gloomy old house.

He wasn't talking to himself any more.

* XXIX *

TOTAL LOSS

IT WAS just turning seven o'clock, when the wind had quit coming in sporadic gusts and was turning into almost a continuous gale, that the caretaker at the Edgebrook Country Club down the road where the old Hoke homestead used to be, stepped outdoors and saw near by, in fact, just yonder-ways past the next little rise in the land to the left, a hectic glowing like a false sunset against the sky-line. As he stared it heightened and widened and reddened upon the horizon. So by that he knew what it must be and he ran back in to give the alarm.

The clubhouse was not yet completed but it had telephone connection with town. He got central on the wire and said there was a blaze, which looked to him like it might be a bad blaze, over in the general direction of Bird's. Central raised the fire station and while she was doing this the caretaker grabbed up his cap and started afoot for the scene of trouble and was among the first to get there.

There was nothing he could do, though. Really there was nothing anybody could do. The blaze had too

strong a headway and traveled too rapidly. The trip of the fire department was no more than a gesture, although a gallant one.

As a matter of fact, the department was under no obligation to go beyond the city limits; nevertheless and notwithstanding, the motorized machines made the three-mile run over freezing and slippery underfooting in what the next morning's local paper described as record-breaking time. Even so, before they arrived the fire was beyond human control, what with that inflammable tindery material which was there to be lapped up and so terrific a wind blowing.

The firemen let the plant go—indeed, they couldn't venture anywhere near it for a while. On orders from the chief, they stood by, ready in case flying sparks should ignite adjacent property. The rushing upper currents of air were streaked across with whirling firebrands, and the heavens overhead were bright as day almost, and there was a big noise like a continuous cannonading as one explosion of barreled combustibles followed close on another.

Evidently the fire had started in the larger of the two warehouses, the one known as Number Two; and as soon as it had eaten through the shingled roof, which was very soon, it spread to a long wooden shed communicating with the main building. It fairly raced along and through that gabled shed, transforming its windows into the semblance of squared scape-vents of a furnace; and almost immediately after that the distil-

lery itself, which was a wide-eaved structure of frame with a crumbly brick front to it, had caught in twenty places at once, so it seemed to the helpless bystanders. The heat kept driving them farther and farther back, so that none of the portable contents could be got at at all, let alone carried out and off to a safety zone.

It was about as complete a piece of destruction as you ever saw in your life, but it certainly made a bully free show and drew a large crowd while it was going good, which was for about an hour and a half. At one time probably two hundred cars were parked on the grounds or along the road in front.

When the sides of Number Two warehouse burst asunder and the flaming rafters were flung aloft as though they had been so many jackstraws and you could see the interior as one huge oblonged caldron of seething, rioting ruination, a tremendous "Ah-h-h!" of involuntary admiration for the daunting beauty of the spectacle went up from everywhere around.

A mile or so away, up the creek valley, a group of men, who had by appointment gathered there, skirmished irresolutely to and fro and watched the unearthly reflections spreading over them and they heard the harsh detonations and sniffed at the curious reek which even at that distance pervaded the wind and made a tingling in their nostrils, and cursed their ill luck, they not knowing their luck was good luck disguised. On farther beyond them, a cordon of other men who had ringed these first men in, likewise felt

and expressed—but not with oaths or blasphemy—a tremendous chagrin for a campaign defeated and a coup miscarried.

Hurrying homeward from the railroad in their little second-hand runabout model, and steering a course by the gay and ruddy lighting above their heads, Morgan and his wife, who from persons at the station on the arrival of their belated train already had learned the news, realized that this tragedy—if for them you could call it that—would serve to solidify and bring to a head sundry private, half-executed plannings of theirs.

Morgan's grandfather sat quietly by a rear window of his old kitchen where the glare of it came through the panes and enveloped him in a sort of rosy radiance and squinted out upon the lurid picture that the burning of his possessions made; and if there was heartbreak in his look, there likewise was a suggestion as of some other emotion. Naturally, you couldn't call it satisfaction; perhaps you might call it resignation.

By nine o'clock the fire had ceased to be an active volcano and was fast becoming a dingy crater. By ten o'clock, for lack of proper fodder to feed on, the fire had about burned itself out. It had burned down to a feebly crackling mass, which in places was heaped up inside the lines of the calcined stone foundations, and in places was depressed—just so much ash and cinder and char, with pits and beds of live coals pockmarking its corrugated surface here and there. In part, the masonry face of the distillery still stood. It was now a

cracked, jagged-edged pinnacle which, as it reared up before that stinky and smoldery sink-hole gaping behind it, would put you in mind of a wrecked headstone for a most untidy grave.

At intervals when the embers flared up with a kind of spurty, expiring vehemence, it was almost completely hidden behind smoke wreaths and hissing up-tossed brands. At other times, the wind for the moment slackening off, the ruined façade might clearly be seen through the murk, and then you saw rather a peculiar thing.

You saw that by some funneling freak of the flames, the big wooden sign reading "Bird & Son" had been spared. It was scorched and it was warped and blistered and at one end had fetched loose from its moorings, so that it dangled lengthwise and clattered against the hot smoke-blackened bricks, but there it was.

Perhaps it was a vaguely sentimental impulse which inspired a squad of the onlookers to do what they presently did do. Or perhaps they merely were moved by the ambition to boast afterwards that they'd had a hand in preserving at least one scrap of salvage from the fire.

In any event, the suggestion having been made, these men, about a dozen of them, borrowed from the hook-and-ladder truck two of its long red ladders and propped them against the tottery wall, and four volunteers climbed up, two to a ladder, and pried the sign loose from its surviving stay, and the other helpers eased it down to the earth. There they balanced it on

their shoulders and in unconscious imitation of pall-bearers, they tramped across lots with it to the door-yard of Bird's Nest and left it on the back porch, where Morgan found it next morning.

But that old sign was all that was saved.

✱ XXX ✱

CHRISTMAS COMES BUT ONCE A YEAR

THERE were those who in succeeding days mentally reviewed the burning-up of the Old Blockhouse concern with a touch of faint regret as for the disappearance of a remembered marker on a road which no longer is trodden but still is pleasantly recalled, with its ruts and its turnings and its shady places and its sunny places. There likewise were those who hailed word of it with unrestrained approval, looking on it as a sign and a portent. Among these latter you must count Mrs. Hawthorne C. Grady, state president of the militant W.N.P.L., and new political factor in the state.

Under ordinary circumstances, Mrs. Grady was not given to rejoicing over the misfortunes of her fellow beings. Here, as by now you must know and acknowledge, was a pure woman and a devout woman, if ever one lived. But, being constituted as she was and feeling as she did, and having, as she had, a high and holy mission ever going on before her vision like a beacon steadily ascending for a pilgrim's guidance, she regarded the thing from a standpoint of symbolism.

To her, any distillery, even though under closure as every distillery was, stood for past iniquities and should the dragons ever be unchained, which heaven forbid, would again become the source of iniquities. To her, any distillery whatsoever was a monster which had spewed out of its dugs a hideous incarnadine torrent of vice and pollution and degradation, it was a fountain sending forth venomous streams to invade the home, to destroy the flower of the nation's youth, to bring crime and want and woe upon the land. To her, its vats were pools where poisons had gathered, its coils were brazen serpents, its furnace fires were even as the furnace fires of hell.

Her satisfaction would have been increasingly greater had Providence decreed that the largest distillery in the state, instead of one of the smaller ones, should wither and topple and be forever blotted out before the purifying flames. Still, this particular distillery had stood in her own county and had sown the seeds of its loins in her own county and if suffered to endure on would have been a reminder to the oncoming generation of the besotted and sodden blindness of their fathers. With Mrs. Grady this was an occasion for congratulation on the part of the entire community, that the Divine Vengeance—if you could put it that way, which she did—had been visited upon a community plague spot.

Her managerial mind saw how the occasion topically might be woven into the fabric of an agreeable event

already scheduled and previously mentioned. With her, to have a good idea was to act on it. Accordingly, on the day after Christmas she set forth to offer the idea to her protégé. She was sure he would in this matter see eye to eye with her.

In her runabout she rode downtown to the Lander Block—the town's tallest skyscraper, it being a towering edifice of seven levels, not counting the basement. She already had tried to telephone the small cottage in the outskirts where her statesman kept bachelor's hall, but evidently he was not at home, nor his darky servant either, for her repeated ringing had brought no response. Nor was there a response from within to her rap at his door here.

In fact, the whole building had a deserted air. It occurred to her then that possibly she might find him at Mr. Braydon's office upstairs. Mr. Braydon was a top-floor lessee, whereas Mr. Simcox was established on the second floor.

The elevator apparently was not in commission that morning. Either it was out of order, as frequently it was, or the attendant still was stoking the cooling embers of the holiday, a thing which so many of his race likewise were doing. So Mrs. Grady, giving a deep sigh, began to climb the stairs, making slow going of it. She was a large-boned and a firm-fleshed lady, as martial-minded ladies are likely to be, and, for a modern woman, very full in the bust. Her next sigh turned into a wheeze.

While she toiled up, flight after flight, and stopped at each landing to pant for breath and ease the ache in her leg muscles, Mr. Braydon and one of his lieutenants, by name Mr. Hodge Scopes, sat aloft there in the front room of Mr. Braydon's two-room suite. Mr. Scopes was one of these human mysteries occasionally encountered in the arena of statecraft who draw no salaries from any known source nor derive any known income from any known investments, who toil not neither do they spin, yet seemingly enjoy a constant affluence.

The room wherein these two gentlemen sat had a disheveled look, and the pent air in it was stale and heavy-laden. Their garments were mussed. You would have said either that these gentlemen had not been to bed at all last night or that they had slept in their clothes. But about them was visible no mark of exhaustion. On the contrary, they seemed distinctly cheerful. Both radiated a pleasant optimism amounting really to an exhilaration. Well, Christmas comes but once a year.

"How about a snack of breakfast?" Mr. Scopes was saying. "All of a sudden I'm startin' in to feel sort of peckish. What say we run down to Tony's Café or the Sans Souci and get a little bite?"

"We better go one at a time, then," Mr. Braydon replied.

"Oh, ever'thing 'll be all hunky-dory," demurred his friend. "We could lock that inside door." He glanced rearward over his shoulder.

"Better not take no chances," Mr. Braydon insisted. "You never can tell what might happen."

"No danger of anybody comin' snoopin' around, if that's what you're drivin' at," said Mr. Scopes. "You know how it is the day after Christmas. I'll bet you there ain't twenty folks all told stirrin' down on the street this mornin'. Last night was sure some night in this man's town!" He snickered as over jovial memories. "Say, Buck, didn't Judge Jimmy Sampler pass right out of the picture, though?"

"He shore did—jest folded up like one of these here condensed time cards. Speakin' of Jimmy Sampler, I like to died one day last week over in Circuit Court. It was a kind of a busy session. The Reverend Philo Janney, he'd been out hustlin' up grist for the mill."

"The Reverend Janney—*whee!* That poor sucker certainly hands me many a good laugh behind his back. He takes this whole darn' business so serious. That's what I can't get over."

"I don't mean him. 'Twas somethin' else that come up. Well, as I says, Janney had quite a batch up for judgment that day. Jest the reg'lar run of shad, though—country darkies that had been ketched with a half-pint of pop-skull or somethin' like that hid away under a feather tick in their cabins, or old wimmin snatched up and stuck in jail for peddlin' home-made mule at two bits a swig, and one feller, a stranger to me, that got overtaken passin' through and they found a gallon jug of amateur gin in his car—nothin' special.

"Well, Judge Jimmy handed out the regular line of lectures and fines and the regular doses along with 'em —sixty days or ninety days or six months, and so on. He shorely cleaned up that docket fast. Then he adjourned court and went on back into his chambers. But before he done that he give me a kind of wink out of the corner of one eye and I knew what that meant, and after the crowd thinned out I followed him on in there; and Commonwealth's Attorney Eskridge was in there, too.

"Well, he opened up a fresh quart and the three of us killed it right there on the spot. It was good likker, too—heap better stuff than lots of the belly wash a feller gets nowadays—a quart out of a case that was bein' held for evidence.

"And just before we taken the first snifter Jimmy says to us, 'Enforcin' the law is certainly mighty thirsty work, boys.' And just before the next snort he says, 'Make 'em do as I say; don't let 'em do as I do—that's the ticket,' he says. And about the time we was all takin' the next one—he was gettin' purty toler'ble well corned-up by then—he says, imitatin' Brother Janney's high-falutin' way of talkin': 'When we're engaged, my friends, in doing the Lord's bidding, it is not for us to question too closely the instrumentalities that we must use. It is not the tool employed, my friends; it is the accomplished task that counts for godliness and right conduct.'

"You'd 'a' swore Janney was right there talkin'. I

jest whooped right out—me and Bill Eskridge both. But the judge, he never cracked a smile oncet. You'd 'a' thought, to hear him, he was still on the bench. He's a card, even if he can't hold his sheer without driftin' off into the great silent spaces.

"Well, comes to that, he ain't the only one that's gaited that way, is he? . . . So, not to take no chances, you better slide on down to Tony's and I'll stay till you get back and then I'll go down for a bite."

* XXXI *

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW DOESN'T HURT YOU

MR. SCOPES stood up, shaking down his wrinkled trouser-legs, but at that moment a knocking sounded on the outer door. Both gentlemen gave slight starts.

"Who is it?" asked Mr. Braydon.

"It is Mrs. Hawthorne C. Grady," came in a familiar sonorous voice through the panels. It is hard to be sonorous and gaspy at the same time, but this talented woman somehow accomplished the feat.

"Jest one moment please, Mizz Grady," said Mr. Braydon. His quick side-grimace toward Mr. Scopes carried a bidding. Already, though, that gentleman was swiftly and silently whisking into a desk drawer certain articles of glassware which had been standing on the table between them, and next was moving to open a window and let a gush of crisp winter wind in.

Nor was Mr. Braydon behindhand in action. He lighted a large black cigar and sent several big puffs of smoke aloft, and hastily he cast a newspaper over a sour-smelling damp smear on the rug.

Then he crossed the room and opened the door, tak-

ing care, however, not to open it too wide and keeping his body in the opening.

"Why, howdy, Mizz Grady," he said with great cordiality. "I'd ask you to come on in, only that lazy darky boy of mine ain't showed up today to clean up, and this place is kind of mussy to be askin' a lady to step into it."

"Good morning," she said, including Mr. Scopes in the greeting. "I'm looking for Mr. Simcox. On the floor below I ran into the janitor and he said he was here with you-all, said he saw all three of you coming in together quite early and that none of you had gone down since."

"Well, now, Mizz Grady, that's right," agreed that quick-thinking man, Mr. Braydon. "B. Gill is here—he's in that next room—but I don't believe you ought to see him jest at this moment. He's layin' down. In fact he's sound asleep, and I'm sure ef you knew all the circumstances you wouldn't want me to roust him up."

"The circumstances?"

"Yessum, he's sick—or anyway he's been sick. He was feelin' some better though jest before he dropped off, about an hour ago."

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Mrs. Grady. "Not seriously sick?"

"Oh, no, nothin' to be worried over. You see, it's like this with B. Gill, Mizz Grady. He's been mightily overworked lately, you know that. After that hard fight we went through before election I thought maybe he'd

have a chance to rest up, but they haven't give him a minute's peace since—newspapers after him for interviews and articles, and people begging him to go here and there all over the map and make speeches tellin' about how we put the thing acros't in this state. You know all about that, too.

"But what maybe you didn't guess was that he's been broodin' stiddy over the work that'll be cut out for him oncet he takes over the governorship. Trouble with B. Gill is he's so blame' conscientious. And there is still quite some house-cleanin' to be done before we get this state dried up plum' dry."

"Indeed there is, Mr. Braydon."

"Yessum. Well, as I say, he's been broodin'. All last night he didn't sleep a wink. Jest walked the floor, he told me—walked it up and down. It's knocked his digestion out, too. And besides, yistiddy he must have et somethin' that upset him and that made it worse. He was in agony all night. Early this mornin' he telephoned me he was on his way here to talk over certain puzzlin' things about his administration and his appointments—that would be jest like him, forgettin' himself in his worryin' over whether he's doin' the right thing by his people.

"The minute I seen him, though, I knew he wasn't in fit shape to be discussin' nothin'. So me and Hod tolled him up here and made him lay down on the sofa in my back room yonder and got him to stretch out and relax, and in a minute he jest dropped off like a

little tired-out child. It was right pitiful, Mizz Grady, it was so. So without it's somethin' terrible important you want to see him about, I'd hate mightily to wake him up and I reckin you feel the same way about it, don't you, Mizz Grady?"

"I emphatically do," said the good woman, all solicitude. "Why, I never suspected! I wouldn't have you disturb him for the world. I hope he sleeps all day—it'll be good for him."

"Yessum, it shorely will," said Mr. Braydon sincerely.

"I'm dead certain of it," put in Mr. Scopes also with fervor.

"What I wanted to talk with him about was a conception I had for his speech tomorrow night," continued Mrs. Grady. "I thought perhaps he might take it, as it were, as a text for a part of his remarks."

"If you're the one thought it up, I bet you it's a fine idea!" exclaimed Mr. Braydon. Mr. Scopes made sounds also indicative of enthusiasm.

"S'pose, Mizz Grady, you sort of outline the gen'ral idea to me," continued Mr. Braydon, "and when B. Gill wakes up I'll tell him about it. There'll be plenty of time for him to think it over and get in touch with you before tomorrow night. He'll be mighty much oblige' to you, I'll swear to that.

"S'pose I jest step out in the hall with you while you tell me." Then, as she elevated her head and sniffed at the fumy atmosphere, he instantly laughed a shame-

faced guilty little laugh. "I see you smell it," he confessed. "Me and Hod here got Christmas in our bones and just before you come, we set down and et—you'd never guess what it was we et, Mizz Grady!

"Between us we et a whole half of a left-over mince pie that somebody sent me. Yessum, jest heated it up on a gas jet and et it up, down to the last crumb. Eatin' a hot mince pie at ten o'clock in the mornin'—wasn't that like a couple of kids?"

By now he had edged out of his quarters and the door was closed behind him. They had perhaps ten minutes together there in the corridor. Parting from him at the conclusion of the conference, Mrs. Grady said:

"Well, probably you are right about it, Mr. Braydon. On second thought, I feel you are quite right about it. We'll just let the matter drop and proceed along the original lines." She moved away, a full-rigged frigate of a lady.

"Oh, one moment, please," she was calling back from the head of the stairs. "I knew I was overlooking something. It's important, too. Please remind him not to forget to use that wonderful inspiring phrase which was so effective during the most critical part of the campaign—the one where he says: 'They have claimed there's not a headache in a barrel of it, but I tell you there's a heartache in every drop!' "

"I guarantee you he'll slip that in somewheres. You can always count on B. Gill, Mizz Grady."

"As well I know," assented the departing chieftain-

ess. "Tell him for me he mustn't overexert himself; tell him I'm saying this for the country's sake as well as his own. His country needs him—needs more men of his spiritual stamp. He's one in a million."

"Ain't it so, Mizz Grady! One in a million! We'll have him in the United States Senate next thing you know. And after that—well, if ever this little old county sends a man to the White House, remember what I'm hintin' to you now, Mizz Grady."

"God speed the day, Mr. Braydon!" She spoke it with fervor.

On that, Mr. Braydon went inside, not forgetting to turn the key in the lock, and in the manner of men exchanging mutual congratulations he and Mr. Scopes shook hands.

"Now that," stated Mr. Braydon, so doing, "that's what I call gettin' out of a tight hole."

"You said a mouthful," corroborated Mr. Scopes. "You took a powerful long time, though. I was beginnin' to get nervous. What'd that there old she-walrus want with Gilly, anyhow?"

"Wanted him for to go into that fire last Monday night—wanted him to bear down heavy on *that.*"

"Why, that wouldn't never do!" exclaimed Mr. Scopes in alarm. "For home consumption and specially amongst the old-timers, that'd be about the worst politics you could think of!"

"Don't I know it! But I had to make her see it. That's what took me so long. I says to her, I says,

'Don't let's be too shore about seein' the handiwork of the Almighty in this here fire,' I says. 'There's some curious talk goin' 'round under cover,' I says. And she says, sort of surprised, 'What talk?' she says."

"My gosh!" blurted Mr. Scopes. "Hadn't she heard?"

"Listen," said Mr. Braydon; "she's like the most of her crowd. Get 'em off their pet line and they don't know yet about the Lusitania bein' sunk—which ain't such a bad thing neither, for fellers like you and me. I had to come out and tell her the facts. I says to her, I says, 'Mizz Grady, there's a kind of a rumor afoot that less'n five hours before that fire started, old Bird was telephonin' in to Ollie Vogelsang and cancelin' every last red cent of the inshoreance he'd been carryin' on his stock and his plant.'

"You should 'a' seen her eyes pop open at that. I kept right on. Oh, I talked to her like a Dutch uncle. I says, 'Yes, and on top of that, Mizz Grady, it's also kind of rumored round that jest about the same time he was telephonin' to the office of the Lander Estate right here in this buildin' and tellin' 'em that, if 'twas agreeable, he'd like to have the two mortgages they were holdin' against him lifted off the distillery and transferred to the homestead and all the lands he still owned.

" 'Naturally,' I says, 'that was plum' agreeable to them, distillery property not bein' worth what it use' to be, not by a long shot; and them likewise knowin' that when they foreclose on the place, which is what

they'll be doin' next, they'll have a property that oughter jest about suit them rich Jews over the state that've been scoutin' round tryin' to find a good central location for that there orphan asylum they want to start. So the Lander boys got the papers fixed up inside of an hour,' I says, 'and somebody dusted out there with 'em and had ever'thing signed, sealed and delivered before six o'clock that night,' I says. 'And the fire broke out about seven o'clock, and if anybody jest puts two and two together, why, there you are,' I says.

"'Why, Mr. Braydon,' she says, 'why, that looks to me like—' But she never got the word out. I cut in on her before she could get it out.

"'Hold on, Mizz Grady,' I says to her. 'You and me can think private what we please. But there's some,' I says, 'that'll say it looks to them like he was t'eched in the head. And some more,' I says, 'that'll say it looks to them like a square-shooter doin' the square thing before he up and wiped the slate off clean. That's the way they're inclined to look at it over at the courthouse,' I says. 'Over there they're callin' it a coincidence. And that's about the best name you could think of to call it by—'coincidence' is.

"'I'll admit to you,' I says, 'that old man Bird's always been one of the worst of these here reactionaries we had, so far as Prohibition was concerned. I'll go further than that,' I says, 'and admit that I never cared much for him and he never was the least bit backward

about showin' that he didn't care for me a-tall. But even so,' I says, 'there's such a thing as forgettin' old grudges when you come down to practical politics.

" 'There's such a thing as not goin' out of your way, when you don't have to, to stir up sympathy for the other side and mebbe make sore feelin's against your own side. There's such a thing,' I says, 'as lettin' bygones be bygones and sometimes it pays in the long run. And here's a case of a bygoner that's jest about gone,' I says.

" 'That old man had a second stroke only night before last—on Christmas Eve,' I says. 'He won't last a month, ef he lasts that long. And,' I says, 'so far as likker-makin's concerned, his family is closed out, lock, stock and barrel,' I says.

"Then I told her the news about Morg Bird. She hadn't heard that, neither, and her right here in the same town all the time, too. I says to her: 'That grandson of his is fixin' to take that there little jag of money that he inherited from old man Scarr here a few years back, and open up one of these newfandangled hop-and-go-fetch-it grocery stores. Him and that French wife of his are goin' to try to run it by themselves,' I says.

" 'They've rented the old Bynum saddlery shop on Boone Street,' I says, 'and aim to start fixin' it up as soon as the Christmas is over with. They've got friends, too,' I says. 'The stock may 'a' petered out consider-

ably,' I says, 'but even so, they'll have influential friends that could mighty easy be stirred up and antagonized,' I says.

"Of course, Hod, along there I didn't tell her my main reason. I didn't tell her, if Gilly went shootin' off his mouth tomorrow night about this thing, that, long about day after tomorrow that big dumb slab-sided ox of a Morg Bird would jest about walk in on him and grab holt of him with his bare fists and pull him apart. And where would you and me be then, with our purty little hand-picked governor littered all over the place?

"I didn't tell her that, though. But I told her plenty and enough. Before I got done with her I made her see how things stood and she gave up and said I was right about it."

"That's good," assented the sapient Mr. Scopes. "Well, that's off our chest. What say we give a look to see how our gallant champeen is makin' out before I go and get me that there delayed breakfast?"

Together they entered the rear room and stood by a rumpled couch, looking down at their sprawled leader.

The Red Lion of the Knobs was redder than usual, his great mop of tawny hair tousled, his handsome boyish-looking face—a face which had been likened to Henry Clay's—swollen and congested, and he snoring lustily through puffed lips.

"Think he'll make it O.K. for tomorrow night?" asked Mr. Scopes dubiously. "All the times I been

spreein' round with him I never saw him deader to the world than what he looks right now."

"Don't be skeered," said Mr. Braydon cheerily. "I'll fetch him round. We'll get Doc Enright up here afterwhile and doc'll give him a good big shot of that old reliable whatever-it-is that always does the trick for him."

"What do you suppose our sacred seacow would 'a' done ef she'd really got wise to this?" asked Mr. Scopes. "Think you could 'a' squared her, so she'd 'a' kept her mouth shut? Or do you think maybe she'd got sore to think how she's been fooled all along?"

"Well, now, I tell you about that," said the elder sage. "There's two separate kinds that I kin think of offhand that take this here thing in earnest: There's them, like her, that never touched red-eye in any way, shape or form; and there's them that tried to drink all there was of it and then quit and went sour on the entire proposition. But nearly everybody else is reasonable, the same as you and me. So it's jest as well for all concerned that she didn't ketch on. She'd 'a' been right disappointed, I expect. She might 'a' gone so far as to talk out in meetin'.

"But as 'tis, she ain't goin' to be disappointed none about tomorrow night, not with me and Doc Enright nursin' him along. You know yourself, Hod, how 'tis with B. Gill? When he's jest gettin' jagged-up good, he makes that red-hot, hell-roarin' speech of his where he

preaches old John Barleycorn's fun'al, and when he's jest gettin' over it and still carryin' a hang-over, he pulls the sobby, weepy, home-and-mother one where he says there's a heartache in every drop. . . . Hod, how about us two heavin' in jest one more good jolt of the heartache?"

POSTSCRIPT

IF YOU should happen to walk along the principal street of a certain small city which is the chief market town and the county seat of a certain ambitious and prosperous county of a certain mid-continental state—to wit: the state of Kentucky—you will be favorably impressed by the evidences of progress and improvement visible on all sides of you. But if you are seeking for oddities in architecture or for strikingly quaint personalities—for what we call "types" and "characters"—it is likely that you may be disappointed.

The same forward-looking spirit which wiped out whole rows of buildings that were old enough to appear antiquated and shabby enough to be picturesque, and ordained that on their sites there should stand bright, smartened-up buildings, all and sundry conforming to the accepted patterns for modern business houses, seems somehow to have evolved out of itself and to match in with these surroundings, a standardized citizenry—fine, patriotic, upstanding people, you understand, but, taking them as they come, not highly distinctive in dress or manner or prevalent mode of thought or in anything at all unless it be their speech.

There you would notice that, while these good Americans utter the racy slang and the crisp metaphors of the current moment, they utter them with an accent wherein the slurred, soft, minus-*r*, minus-*g* drawl of the typical Southerner is predominant, but having for a sort of half-smothered undertone just a trace of that nasal whine which in the popular mind is associated with the native stocks of our great Middle West.

Otherwise than this, though, the run of them probably would impress themselves upon you as being about such uniformities and such conformities as you'd meet in any one of fifty brisk interior communities between the Cumberlands and the Kaw. Well, you know how it is these days? These days you don't see many people who have the air about them of having been built on a special last to a special model, but you do see a great many who look as though they might have been turned out on a press in job lots by the gross and the great gross. Or put it this way: Formerly we more or less were a hand-made race, now we're mostly machine-made.

So naturally we think machine-made thoughts, naturally we coin machine-made slogans to express our civic pridefulness. Drop into any office of the Commercial Club of this town, corner of Main and Crittenden, and meet the paid secretary of that organization and you will find it thus and so.

This fine young man, the secretary, may be a trifle shy on the earlier history and the earlier traditions of

these parts—and why should he, of all men, clutter up his mind with useless litter?—but his conversation abounds in pleasing facts and up-to-the-minute figures touching on recent growth in population and present and future industrial activities.

Look at the school system. Look at the municipal power plant. Look at the paved streets—eleven miles of them. Look at the low rate of taxation. Look at the average weekly bank clearings. Look at the new shoe factory and the new broom-works and the new cannery. Look at that skyscraper just over the way. Look at all those motorcars rushing to and fro out yonder, so that at certain hours it's as much as your life is worth to try to get across the street.

Look at the statistics on law enforcement and good order. Not a single homicide anywhere in the county during the last six months—people down here don't tote pistols any more, don't shoot it out on the county square. Maybe once they did, but not any more.

Then the flood of slogans:

Here's the Place to Raise a Family! The Front Door to Dixie! The Gem of the Blue Grass! Where the Latchstring Is Always Out! Make Your Home with Us! Watch Us Climb!

Take away that labial idiosyncrasy of his, and the young man is as like to any given secretary of any given Commercial Club over this broad land as one pea is like to another pea. And he fits the local picture. He's a composite and he has a composite for a background.

Only if you watch closely while going along through this town, will you detect here and there a lingering, dozy something or other that seems even faintly reminiscent of a more leisurely gaited and possibly a more romantic-seeming period than this one is—like a splash of a once savory but now staled sauce on a clean smooth platter. It may be a fragment of the old-timy idiom mixed in with the conventional thieves' argot which, particularly among our youth, is favored nowadays.

It may be a magnolia tree or a holly or a hackberry struggling to live on, with its roots buried under a slab of concrete sidewalk and its soot-smothered limbs brushing the façade of a fashionable tourists' rest. It may be a neglected byway drowsing in the sun like a municipal foundling.

It may be—it likely will be—that battered, faded-out old sign swinging above the doors of a spick-and-span Cash and Carry grocery on Boone Street just off Main, a few steps past the corner, which being the busiest corner downtown requires the services of a traffic cop from eight A.M. to ten P.M., daily except Sundays.

Inside and out, this grocery is smart and fine. But the sign, from sheer decrepitude, is ready to fall apart. Its wording, which reads "Bird & Son," is so nearly obliterated that only when the light is good can you make out what it says. One of the owners of the store is named Bird—Morgan Bird—but he hasn't any son. He has two small daughters but as yet no son. His partner in the business is his wife, a volatile, wide-awake,

bird-eyed little woman who betrays her nationality by giving to the final syllables of certain words a musical twist so that they rather sound like syllables that had been put up on a curling iron. Somebody probably will be telling you that Morgan Bird married her in France during the great World War.

Both of them are highly thought of, the wife being especially well-liked. She is a hustler for trade, and hustlers are valued hereabouts. She keeps the books, does most of the buying and her share of the selling. By all accounts, and at last accounts, the business was successful. A good many people attribute a major share of its success to her, she being so much quicker on the uptake than her tall, reserved, steady-paced husband is.

To look at him, you'd never accuse him of having a sentimental side. He has it, keeping it well concealed, though. It is because he has it that there hangs above his shop door this rickety old sign, which is so incongruously placed and seemingly so meaningless.

In another manner, peculiar to him, he proves the same unsuspected fact: On Sunday mornings he generally walks out to the Edgebrook Country Club three miles from town. Week days he is too busy for sport, what with his long hours at the Cash and Carry and his duties as commander of the American Legion Post and his membership in Rotary and in the Masonic Lodge and so on.

But his Sundays he frequently spends at Edgebrook, of which he is secretary and chairman of the greens

committee, Mr. Chauncey Lander, of the Lander Bank, being president. He shoots a fair game of golf—nothing sensational but steady and dependable; around ninety, his score will average.

Mrs. Bird doesn't play. In the afternoons while he is out on the course, she usually sits on the porch reading or sewing. Being a foreigner, she sees no harm in sewing on Sunday afternoons. She drives out to join him after Mass at her church, bringing the little girls, and they have the seventy-five-cent buffet luncheon together, and then he gets in his eighteen holes, and after that the four of them go home in the family car.

Just beyond the club is the transformed piece of land where this Morgan Bird spent his childhood and lived until he was past thirty. Now it is one of the show places of the county.

The big new Hebrew Orphanage is there, with its endowed model dairy and its scientific farm school and its sanitary sewage disposal system and its cadet corps and all. The administration building, which is known as the Fannie J. Schwartzenberger Memorial Hall, and is in all regards a handsome and impressive building, stands approximately on the spot where there once stood an old-fashioned homestead.

Tall trees surround it and on the kempt and tended lawns in front of it spry little fellows in gray uniforms may be skylarking about. It may have been a sleepy-looking, lazy-looking spot once, but that isn't true of it any more.

It is, as you have just heard, one of the neighborhood show places, but Morgan Bird never detours out of his way to give it a look. If business takes him by the grounds, he keeps his eyes straight ahead of him on the broad macadamized highway, glancing neither to to the right nor to the left for so long as he is passing the high iron fence with its gilded spearheads on the tips of its shining black pickets and its lofty white marble gate-posts standing up like entrances to a rich cemetery.

THE END

39353000788461